

NEXT ROUND'S ON US | BEST BARS IN AMERICA PART 3, PG. 87



Esquire

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Is Not a Leader
to Assure
Us of Our
Greatness...

...But One Who
Will Challenge
Us to Reassert It.

Charles P. Pierce
on the Reality
of Barack Obama



JUNE 2008
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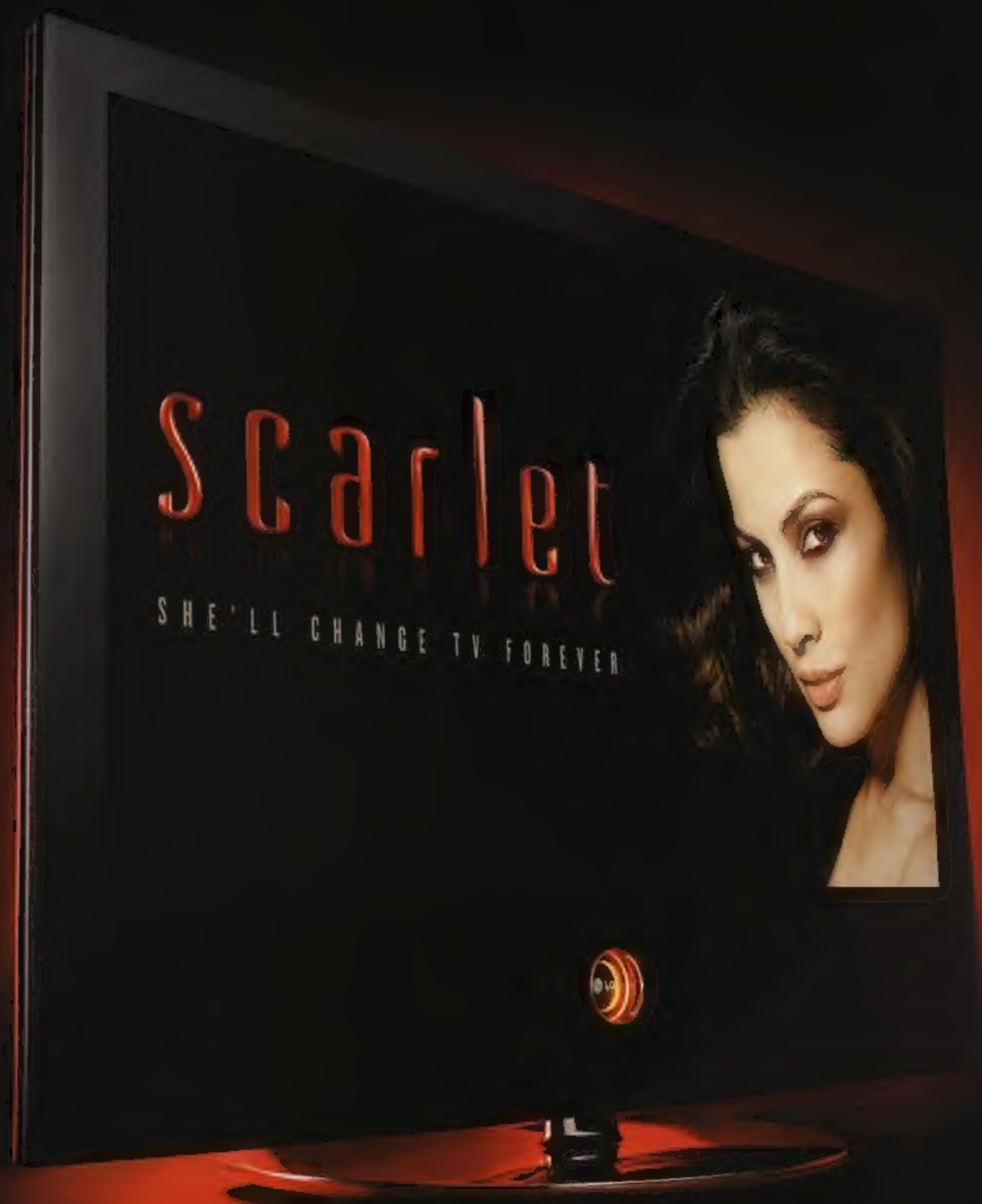


Some journeys cannot be put into words. New York, 3 a.m. Blues in C.

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A SPECIAL PROMOTION FOR ESQUIRE READERS



COCKTAIL EVENT CELEBRATES NEW 'MADE IN ITALY' CAMPAIGN

The Italian Trade Commission, in partnership with Harper's Bazaar, Town & Country and Esquire, hosted an exclusive reception to celebrate the new face of the ITC's 'Made in Italy' campaign, actress Isabella Rossellini.

At the event, Ms. Rossellini was also presented with the first ever 'Life in I Style' Icon Award, an honor celebrating Mr. Rossellini's accomplishments as not only an legendary actress, but also as a global brand ambassador for Italy.



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From top left: Dr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Hearst Magazines EVP/Chief Marketing Officer/Publishing Director Michael Clinton, Isabella Rossellini with the 'Life in I Style' Award, Ambassador Umberto Vattani, President of the Italian Trade Commission; Isabella Rossellini and Esquire VP/Publisher Kevin C. O'Malley; Dr. Srgjan Kerim and Ambassador Umberto Vattani; Town & Country VP/Publisher Jim Taylor; Isabella Rossellini, and Harper's Bazaar Associate Publisher Kevin Martinez; Esquire Associate Publisher/Marketing Stephen Jacoby, Town & Country Editor in Chief Pamela Fiori, and Town & Country Editor David Masello; Hearst's Michael Clinton and Giorgio Canali, Canali USA; Actor Alan Cumming(center) with guests.

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ON THE COVER: PHOTOGRAPH BY PLATON/ART DEPT./CPI-SYNDICATION.

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Style Agenda

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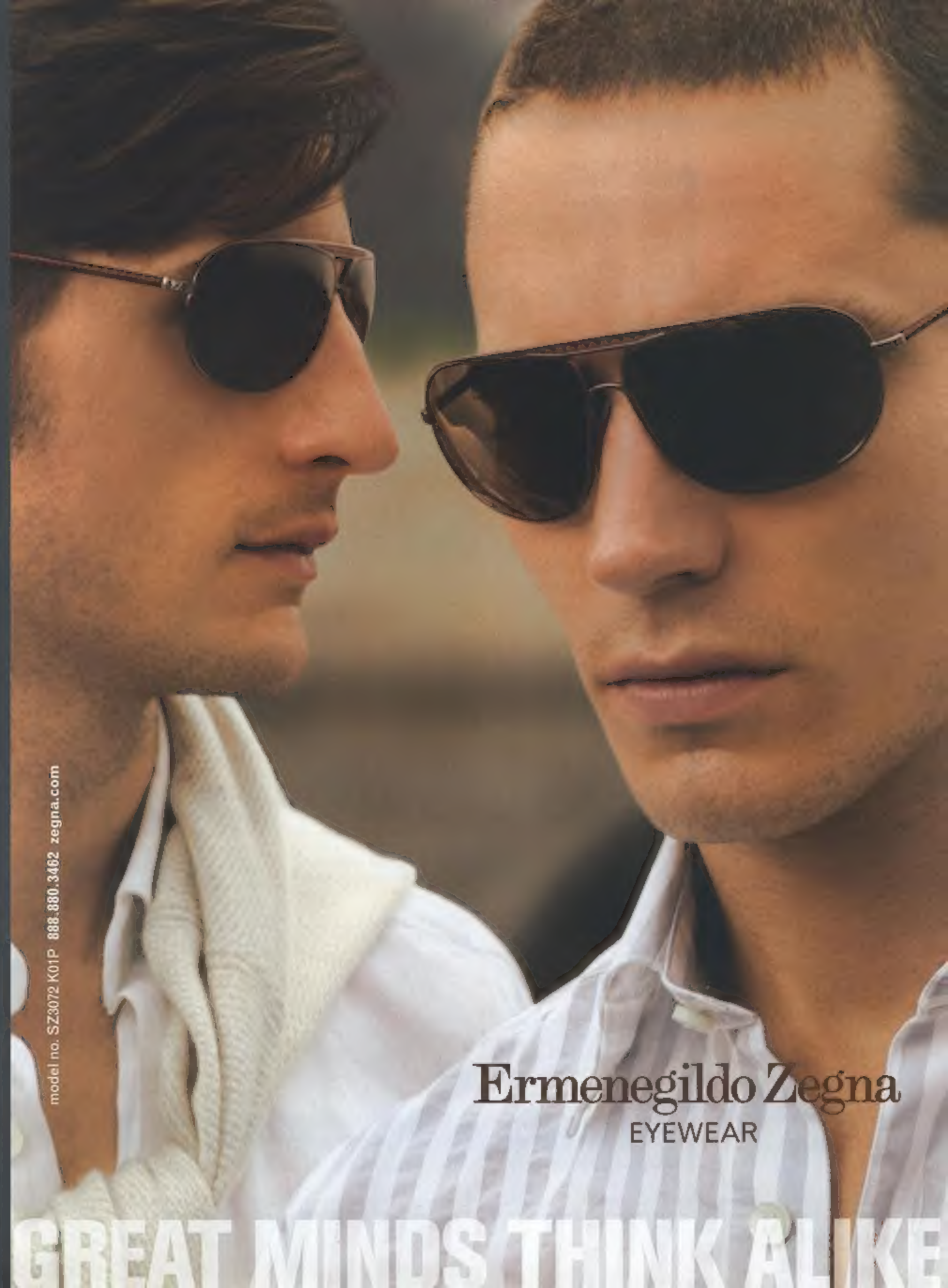


HUG YOUR PEOPLE

HUG YOUR PEOPLE is more than a book to Jack Mitchell; it's his personal mission to bring civility and compassion back to the way we all conduct our business and our lives. Jim Nantz of CBS Sports is among the early admirers, calling it "a book rich with wisdom."

The Mitchell family secret for success should be read by everyone. Jack's new book reveals the "personalization with people" philosophy behind the hugging culture that has won his stores a reputation for having engaged employees with longevity and creating loyalty that is the envy of the retail world.

To buy the book or for more information, log onto: www.hugyourpeople.com



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GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE

This Way In

THIS MONTH IN THIS WAY IN: Angry Heath Ledger fans (pages 18, 20), how to dress like your favorite movie stars, even if they're pandas (page 20), the best bars in the world (page 28); and a bunch of great things that didn't make it past forty-seven (page 28).



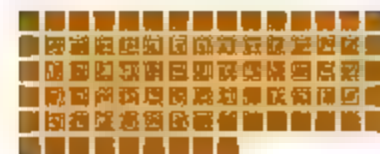
There was no real consensus on how to react to April's stories about Heath Ledger and Admiral William Fallon. But then we showed George Clooney a sordid video. Nobody felt good about that one.

WHAT YOU WROTE ABOUT:

Heath Ledger



Admiral William Fallon



George Clooney



Chuck Klosterman



The Music Awards



Kissing A.J. Jacobs



AS IF WE'D GIVE AN UNLIKABLE GUY FIVE COVERS

For the profile accompanying George Clooney's fifth appearance on our cover, editor at large A.J. Jacobs showed the actor Web sites dedicated to him ("The 9:10 to Crazyland," April). He also shared a video that, thankfully, had nothing to do with Clooney—the notorious 2 Girls 1 Cup.

Jacobs's article had me laughing out loud. Mr. Clooney confirmed my suspicions: He must have been the savior of his classmates and bane of his teachers' existence. An über-class clown. He's one funny guy.

STEVEN SILZ CARSON
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Clooney seems like a genuinely good guy, with the perspective and sense of humor he needs to stay sane² in a world like ours. Plus, he actually cares about people other than himself, which, of course, results in him being targeted by all manner of nutjobs and jealous C-listers like Fabio and Trump. I just hope he can overcome the emotional scars he got from watching 2 Girls 1 Cup.

ROBERT YOUNG
Isle of Palms, S.C.

Although I didn't see the video you showed Clooney, I did read what it was about, and I am appalled. You knew that many people, including kids, would read the article and look up the video, yet you chose to include it. I find your shameless lack of responsibility simply staggering.

MARIA LYNCH
Kennett Square, Pa.



We're as appalled by it as you are (The video, not our irresponsibility). For you and anyone else who was disturbed by that video—including those impressionable kids—check out this classic to cleanse your mental palate. We like to call it 2 Otters 1 Pond: youtube.com/watch?v=epUk3T2Kfno.

—Editors

NONFICTION AS FICTION

After the sudden death of Heath Ledger, writer Lisa Taddeo set out to create a fictional self-portrait of the actor during his final days ("The Last Days of Heath Ledger," April). She explored his neighborhood and interviewed anyone she could who'd been in contact with him that week.

The rest she filled in with her imagination.

I am shocked and appalled. How dare you print something so insensitive and despicable? It is truly sad when writing about someone's tragic passing is welcome fodder for your magazine. Labeling it fiction doesn't make it right.

DAWNA LOUGH
Los Angeles, Calif.

Heath Ledger's death came too early. So early that the media hadn't completely categorized him. Was he a sex beast or a love-struck father?

CONTEXT-FREE HIGHLIGHT FROM A LETTER WE WON'T BE RUNNING

Remember, you're not stuck in a Thai prison, alone and hungry.

(1) The number of people required to have a satisfying drink. More tips on drinking alone are on page 89. (2) According to a 2003 survey, women who stay single their whole lives enjoy better mental health than those who go through separation or divorce. For actress Radha Mitchell's views on relationships, see page 125.

ROLEX.COM

OYSTER PERPETUAL DAY-DATE

IN PLATINUM

ROLEX

NEW YORK

Or just a guy who liked the big city but not the bright lights? The brilliance of Taddeo's narrative is that she presents these questions without the underlying assumption that we are going to get any answers. There was no sense in writing something that claims to get the facts straight. The facts were scarce, and *straight* is a boring word.

KUMARI ADAMS
Baltimore, Md.

For more of the feedback we got on this piece, see below.
—Editors

AN UNTIMELY EXIT

Also in the April issue, former Naval War College professor and *Esquire* contributing editor Thomas P.M. Barnett wrote about Admiral William "Fox" Fallon, the now-former head of U.S. Central Command, who was responsible for military strategy for the Middle East ("The Man Between War and Peace"). Barnett's piece portrayed Fallon as frequently at odds with the White House, especially over Iran and Iraq policy. Shortly after the article's publication, Admiral Fallon was forced to resign.

What an important piece, informing us of the disastrous course America is on. Fallon was one of a few senior military commanders known to the public who has dared speak the truth to Bush about his failed military policies, and it's sad to learn of Fallon's early resignation. Thank you for presenting Admiral Fallon's views and exposing the Bush regime's push for more war while they shred what we are sworn to protect and defend, our Constitution. My hope is that the next Centcom commander will continue to work on reducing aggression, even as Bush and Cheney work to increase it.

MIRIAM ADAMS
Albuquerque, N. Mex.

This article is a triumph. Barnett gives rare insight into one of our country's

WHAT THEY'RE WEARING IN THE MOVIES

I have an idea for a feature. I'm constantly trying to track down clothing worn in movies, particularly action movies. Maybe you guys could do something on how actors dress for their roles. Surely people would be interested to learn how Hollywood dresses its characters.

MIKE MANNING
Boston, Mass.

—Editors

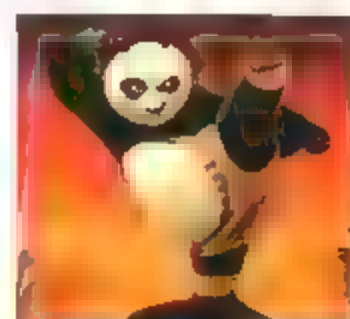
We thought it best to give you a range of styles to choose from. Enjoy.



STEVE CARELL in *Get Smart*, out June 20. Suit by Valentino.



MARK WAHLBERG in *The Happening*, out June 13. Cotton shirt by J.Crew; cotton T-shirt by Banana Republic; jeans by Agave.



PO in *Kung Fu Panda*, out June 6. CGI shorts and ankle wraps by DreamWorks Animation.

finest leaders. This should be required reading³ for anyone interested in global diplomacy. I hope Admiral Fallon's untimely resignation leads him to a greater role for America.

CAPTAIN D. R. BROWN, USN,
RETIRED
Winter Park, Fla.

It's sad how Barnett appears to share Fallon's reasonable views on foreign and defense policy, yet he happily presented them to the world (and the White House) in a manner guaranteed to hurt both Fallon and those who support his approach.

WILLIAM HARROP
Washington, D.C.

I guess you got what you and Barnett predicted: the resignation of one of the few, if not the only, rational strategic thinkers in the administration's military leadership. You couldn't wait ten

months until a new administration took office before you published this story?

MARK ZIVIN
Evanston, Ill.

CLOTHES FOR TALL PEOPLE AND YET ANOTHER REASON TO OWN MORE THAN ONE BELT

I am six foot nine⁴ and wear a size 18 shoe, which means I can't shop in regular stores and am rarely able to try things on. Unfortunately, I am not blessed with an NBA player's bankroll, so custom suits are out of the question. What can I do? I just want some regular clothes. Are there any stores where I can find some decent big-and-tall clothing?

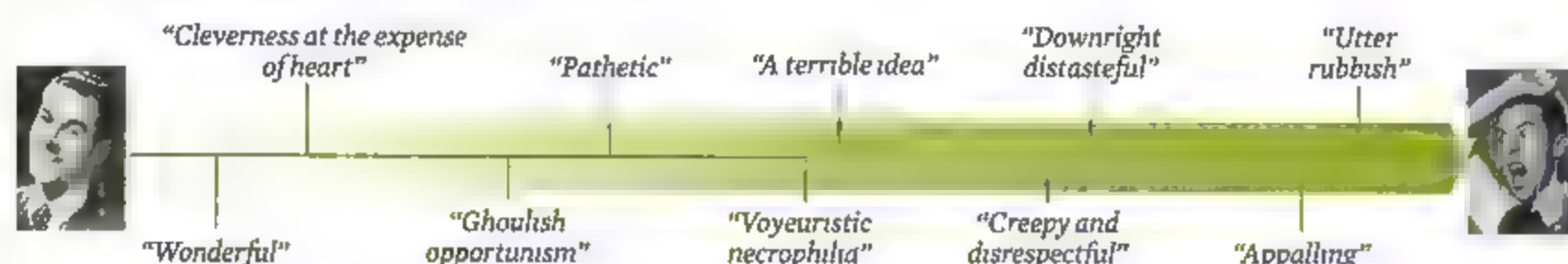
MARK CORSO
San Francisco, Calif.

Esquire fashion director Nick Sullivan responds: For now, you're unfortunately stuck shopping online. RochesterClothing.com is a good place to start, along with Jack Victor, Banana Republic, J.Crew, and the Gap.

[continued on page 24]

THE REACTION METER: "THE LAST DAYS OF HEATH LEDGER"

Lisa Taddeo's fictional re-creation of Heath Ledger's final week really riled people. Although we called the story reported fiction, it turns out you had other names for it. And some of them were kind of mean.



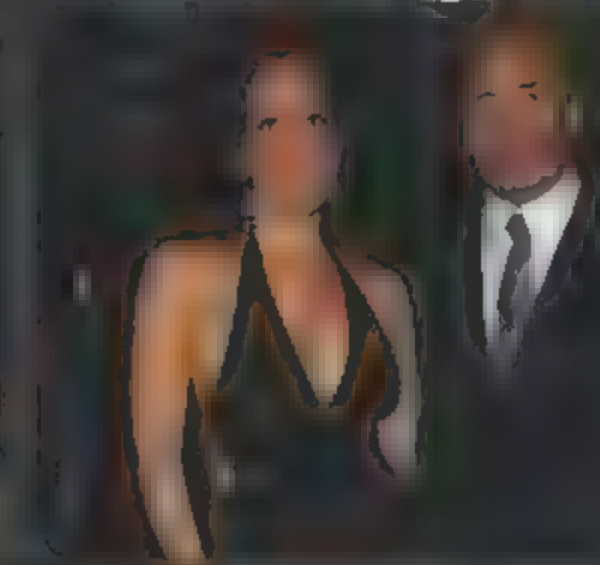
[3] According to eminent literary scholar Harold Bloom, the Western canon includes more than one thousand works. You can read four of them right now (sort of) on page 156. [4] In England, enough to potentially qualify him as an Olympic athlete. To see why, go to page 68.

POLO
BLACK
RALPH LAUREN

RALPH LAUREN



THE MEN'S FRAGRANCE

ESQUIRE READERS

100

East Side Home

EDITOR'S LETTER

What Lies Beneath



THIS OBAMA THING. Jay-zus. Twenty-two thousand people show up in State College, Pennsylvania, to hear him give a speech. This wasn't the first time, of course. Are you starting to get the sense that there *really* is something happening here?

There's one thing that keeps occurring to me that helps explain the persistence of this excitement. I mean, it's been so long since a politician generated this kind of hysteria that it's gotta be more than his stance on health care or Iraq or "change." Part of it is that Obama is the projection of a recurring dream our popular culture has had for as long as there's been popular culture. He's Jimmy Stewart's character in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and he's Robert Redford's character in *The Candidate* and Kevin Kline's in *Dave* and Martin Sheen as Jed Bartlet. He's the fictional character who rescues us

from our worst selves and, with the exercise of will and goodness and good ol' American common sense, cleanses us and returns us to our best selves.

But I suspect the reality is that he's far more than just a receptacle for our hopes and dreams. I suspect there's substance in there. His speech on race in America was as brave and substantial and risky a political document as I've ever read. Still, who knows? We're not gonna know whether he's capable of leading us to reassert American greatness until years after he starts doing it (if he gets the chance to start doing it).

But hell, it's not as though we don't need someone or something to wash away the stains on our national conscience. Abu Ghraib. Guantánamo. Waterboarding. I'm not naive enough to buy into this idea that we have *suddenly* become a nation of torturers; over the life of our country, we've committed atrocities with the worst of them. But the Bush administration's obsessive need to give itself permission to do whatever it deems necessary—in the form of commissioning a young legal scholar named John Yoo to compose memos that legitimized both torture and presidential autocracy—is something new. It's the official record of executive-branch corruption, akin to Nixon's tapes. The impulse to protect oneself morphing into the instrument of ultimate humiliation. It seems inevitable that there will be many more such documents and revelations to come.

So in this issue, we decided to poke at these matters a little more. We asked ~~Charles~~ ~~Pierce~~ to cast a cynic's eye on our golden boy, and we asked ~~John H.~~ ~~Richardson~~ to look with empathy at the Bush administration's most recent fall guy. Each piece is surprising, and each piece demonstrates that our best impulses are never guaranteed to overcome our worst impulses. And vice versa.

—DAVID GRANGER

Esquire

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I still can't believe you killed the Dubious Achievement Awards. I accept that all things must end, even good things, but Dubious shouldn't stop at forty-seven. What stops at forty-seven?

B. BERTSCH
Matthews, Ind.

We did some research, and it turns out Dubious is in good company. Many things stopped at forty-seven. Like the Oklahoma Sooners' 1953-1957 football winning streak. Hank Aaron's 1971 home-run total, the most of any season in his career, the number of sentences in the Declaration of Independence, the

number of miracles Jesus performed⁽⁷⁾ in the Bible, and Jack Kerouac. —Editors

My friend and I were just watching the Black Crowes' Freak 'N' Roll ... Into the Fog concert, and we wondered if old Ed on the keys makes the same money as Chris and Rich. We thought Klosterman would be the perfect person to settle our confusion. Do drummers and bass players take a lower cut than more prominent frontmen?

JOSH BALDWIN
Lewisburg, W. Va.

Klosterman didn't know, so we got you the next best thing: Lily the intern. According to her insistently anonymous source at a major music publisher, it depends on the band. U2 has traditionally split their profits evenly—a primary reason, we assume, for their longevity. As for the Black Crowes, the important thing to consider is this: You should be listening to better music.

—Editors

Letters to the editor may be mailed to The Sound and the Fury P.O. Box 1704, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. Also, Esquire encourages the use of e-mail (to esquire@hearst.com or via the Web at esquire.com/talk) and fax (212-649-4305). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. For subscription questions, please go to service.esquire.com.

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THE NEW BEST BARS IN THE WORLD

This month's issue includes the third annual "Esquire's Best Bars in America" (page 87). To honor such an occasion, we asked our drinks writer, David Wondrich, to update one of our first lists of exceptional drinking spots, December 1959's "The World's Seven Greatest Bars."

| ORIGINAL PICK | WHY WE CHOSE IT | WHAT IT'S LIKE NOW | TODAY'S EQUIVALENT |
|---|--|--|---|
| Raffles Bar, Singapore | Exotic Asia, with excellent drinks. | Tourist trap, with premixed drinks. | Tender Bar, Ginza, Tokyo |
| Pied Piper Bar, Palace Hotel, San Francisco | It was all about the Maxfield Parrish mural. | Sadly, the mural is flanked by wide-screen TVs. | Bourbon & Branch, San Francisco |
| Horseshoe Bar, Hotel Shelbourne, Dublin | Swank "Georgian setting" and "landed gentry." | The gentry have more sources of income. | Horseshoe Bar, Hotel Shelbourne, Dublin |
| El Floridita, Havana, Cuba | "An institution of unique integrity," with rum. | Tourist trap, still with rum. | Mas Camp Pub, Port of Spain, Trinidad |
| Ritz Bar, Paris | Where "the jet set show up to see who's in Paris." | The action has shifted to the Ritz's other bar. | The Bar Hemingway, Hôtel Ritz, Paris |
| 21 Club, New York | Unknowns "don't get past the iron gate." | Still excellent. If not the center of cool it was. | Milk & Honey, New York |
| Ritz Bar, London | "The temple of the perfect Martini." | Renovated out of existence. | Salvatore at Fifty, London |

CONTEXT-FREE HIGHLIGHT FROM A LETTER WE WON'T BE RUNNING

(7) None of those miracles took place in the desert, which is perhaps what it would take to find adventurer Steve Fossett, something Luke Dittrich attempted—and writes about on page 76.

Dear Ketel One Drinker

Whoever said you have to take the rough with the smooth clearly wasn't a Ketel One drinker.

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THE VOCABULARY (Terms and Ideas you will encounter in the pages that follow. Great for conversation.)



FIG. 1

• **OBLIVIOUS ABSORPTION** *n*: The uptake into your body of chemicals found in everyday medicines and grooming products, like sodium lauryl sulfate (stuff that makes your toothpaste foam). (SEE PAGE 51.)

• **EXTRATHEATRICAL INDIGNITIES** *n*: Things you have to endure while sitting in a theater: popcorn chewing, cell-phone ringing, impromptu film criticism, armrest hegemony, general stickiness, etc. (SEE PAGE 46.)

• **"TWO DUDES FROM THE WEST"**: A metaphor for a pair of counterparts in a disagreement in which one party highlights a tenuous connection with the other party to gain sympathy. Variations: "two dudes with brown hair," "two dudes with shoes on." (SEE PAGE 44.)

• **oval awkwardness** *n*: THE PRODUCT OF STILTED INTERACTION WITH A POWERFUL MAN IN HIS OFFICE. (SEE PAGE 44.)

• **EMPIRICALLY DRUNK** *adj*: Inebriation due to a philosophical approach to drinking in which *more* is generally better than *better*. (SEE PAGE 36.)

• **STONE BLINDNESS** *n*: A condition common among landscaping professionals in which one temporarily loses sight of a project, both its component parts (the rocks) and the larger goal (the wall). (SEE PAGE 52.)

• **spectatoring** *v*: THE ACT OF CONCENTRATING TOO HARD ON ONE'S OWN PERFORMANCE DURING SEX. (SEE PAGE 58.)



FIG. 2

• **FEMIDENIM** *n*: Girlie jeans. (SEE PAGE 66.)

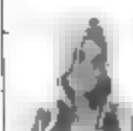
• **STERIOD FREEDOM** *n*: A cause espousing that nearly all purported steroid evils are either false or greatly exaggerated and that congressional hearings and investigations into steroid usage are a complete waste of time. (SEE PAGE 34.)



FIG. 3

CONTEXT-FREE PIECES OF ADVICE IN THIS SECTION:

- TAKE TWO BABY ASPIRINS A DAY
- LISTEN TO THE SILVER JEWS
- KEEP YOUR LAWN 3 TO 3.17 INCHES HIGH
- PUT THE CAMERA DOWN
- MAYBE DON'T GOOGLE "ROUGH SEX" IN YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S PRESENCE



"Everybody wants me to have my curves." —MARISA MILLER PG. 48

"Don't brush your teeth like you're scrubbing a toilet." —DR. MEHMET OZ, PG. 51





(Film)

Are You Getting This?

The shameless showmanship of *Surfwise*

By Mike D'Angelo

You're more interested in Doug Pray's fascinating new documentary *Surfwise* than you think you are—unless you actually yearn to see yet another *Endless Summer* montage of carefree dudes conquering mammoth waves. Not only is *Surfwise* not really about surfing, but Pray, who's previously made fine but fairly conventional music docs (*Hype!*, *Scratch*), is in no particular hurry to reveal what it is about. Docs have been moving away from vérité integrity and embracing stunts ever since Michael Moore's *Roger & Me*, but this is the first one that boasts a mid-film "plot twist" to rival the casual oh-by-the-way mindfucks of

Lost. And yet I wonder whether Pray himself recognizes what's most bizarre about his movie.

That is, apart from the octogenarian dude we see in the opening scenes, riding an exercise bike naked and rambling about how his life changed when he finally learned how to eat pussy. This aggressively eccentric coot is Dorian "Doc" Paskowitz, who back in the '50s abruptly abandoned his lucrative medical practice and decided to spend the rest of his life as a surf happy nomad. He and wife, Juliette, speedily produced nine children (eight of them boys), and the entire brood lived in a single 24-foot camper, traveling from beach to beach in search of the perfect wave. Nobody went to school or was in any way home-

schooled, the kids were raised almost oblivious to everything except the pleasure of the moment.

Pray interviews all nine of the Paskowitz kids, now middle-aged, at length, and he has no qualms about manipulating us with their craftily edited reminiscences. Only midway through *Surfwise* does it become clear that what we assumed to be a paean to hedonism and "following your bliss" is in fact an examination of ruined lives and that many of Doc's offspring now view the family's protohippie lifestyle as a singular form of child abuse—one that permanently impaired their ability to function in everyday society, since all they know how to do is eat macrobiotic food, sleep four to a bed, and surf.

Pretty compelling stuff. And yet, when the movie ended, I wasn't thinking about the importance of traditional education or the morality of having raucous sex two feet away from your preadolescent children or about the family as cult. I was wondering where the hell all the cameras came from.

Surfwise is crammed with vintage photos and Super 8 movie footage of the family's adventures. As bizarre as they may otherwise seem, and however ascetic they professed to be, the Paskowitzes possessed the same mania for self-documentation that the rest of us do.

I remember being equally flummoxed by the copious home-movie footage that turned up in the award-winning doc *Capturing the Friedmans*,



The Paskowitz family at home.

THE UNDERRATED OEUVERE: RAY WINSTONE



Before *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, the 51-year-old Ray Winstone brought pugnacious charm to smaller parts in A-list prestige pics like *The Departed* and *Cold Mountain*. He was even digitally rendered as the titular Anglo-Saxon warrior in *Beowulf*. After three dozen films, the guy still hasn't turned in a bad performance. In *Sexy Beast*, he lends surprising pathos to a safecracking thug and holds his own against spit spewing, psychopathic Sir Ben Kingsley. Then there's Agnes Browne, *The War Zone*, *Nil by Mouth*. You want a man? Bloody hell, you've got one.

—STEPHEN GARRETT

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANK STOCKTON

PREFALL 08

DOLCE & GABBANA

(Film)

about a Long Island family torn apart when two members were arrested for child molestation back in the late '80s. Now, though, I'm starting to think we might soon feel nostalgic for documentaries like these, featuring images nobody ever expected might one day become part of a feature film. At this point, we're all consciously or unconsciously crafting our own biopics on a daily basis.

Surfwise demonstrates both stages of this trend. The lack of self-consciousness evident in all the stills and movies that were shot back in the '60s and '70s finds a queasy, distorted reflection in the final sequence: a reunion of the entire Paskowitz family. Some of the kids, like eldest son David, had been estranged from their parents and/or certain siblings for many years, and there's something supremely discomfiting about watching them tearfully embrace even as they know full well that Pray and his camera are just a few feet away, recording the tender moment for posterity and profit. Those feeling even less charitable might conclude that this reunion was arranged less because the family needed closure than because *Surfwise* needed an ending. It's the essence of the modern condition: You can't stop watching, but every fiber of your being is still shouting, "Put the goddamn camera down!"

THE RULES

Rule No. 763 If on your journey you encounter a Mexican woman selling tamales out of an Igloo cooler, buy some. Rule No. 779 In descending order of quality: "Greatest Hits," "Best of," "Very Best of," "The Singles," "Ultimate Collection." Rule No. 794 Rarely look down.

The Hall of Cultural Significance

The six most intriguing performances this month

ACTRESS
WHOSE NAME
WE JUST
MEMORIZED



Billie Piper in Showtime's *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*. Introducing the television show least likely to be TiVo'd by Eliot Spitzer: *Call Girl* is already a hit in the UK, and Piper's portrayal of a high-class London hooker is sexy enough to blind men to the fact that, with all the quizzical relationship talk, they're essentially watching *Sex and the City*. See also: **Katherine Waterston** in *The Babysitters*.

WHITE GUY
OF THE
MONTH



David Sedaris, author of *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*. The former *Esquire* contributor's first book of essays in four years contains two originally published here: "Buddy, Can You Spare a Tie?" and "That's Amore." And no matter how many times you read about him employing an external catheter system with a "freedom leg bag" hidden in his pants, it never gets old. See also: **Rob Corddry** in *What Happens in Vegas*.

BRITISH
ACTOR WHO
PLAYS AMER-
ICANS BET-
TER THAN
AMERICANS



Tom Wilkinson. As HBO sees it, there is no better choice than a British actor to play two famous American statesmen—Ben Franklin in the miniseries *John Adams* and, currently, James Baker in *Recount*, a film about the Florida ballot-counting controversy of the 2000 presidential election. And they're right. If ever a man deserved an Emmy, it's Wilkinson, both a gifted performer and a dedicated patriot. See also: **James McAvoy** in *Wanted*.

NONHUMAN
OF THE
MONTH



Steroids, in the documentary *Bigger, Stronger, Faster**. Turns out you stand a better chance of being hospitalized from the adverse effects of multivitamins than from those of steroids. Filmmaker/devil's advocate Chris Bell's documentary takes an original look at performance-enhancing drugs, with appearances by Arnold Schwarzenegger, Barry Bonds, and a cadre of greased-up guys in Lycra. See also: the shoe phone in *Get Smart*.

UNLIKELY
MEMOIRIST



William Shatner, in his autobiography *Up Till Now*. There may be more endearingly self-aggrandizing memoirs available, but none of them contain winding anecdotes about \$20,000 *Pyramid* appearances and on-set spats with Leonard Nimoy, or page-by-page plugs for williamshatner.com. They should teach this stuff in school. See also: **Grandmaster Flash**, author of *The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash*.

SUDDENLY
IMPORTANT
DEAD GUY



Genghis Khan in *Mongol*. Ever wondered why the thirteenth-century warrior was so ornery? Tough childhood. This Russian film explores a back story that history forgot, namely a murdered father, stolen wife, and years of slavery. Given the obstacles, it was either conquer half the world or star in a Lifetime original series. See also: **John Coltrane**, subject of *Clawing at the Limits of Cool*; **Miles Davis**, *John Coltrane*, and *the Greatest Collaboration Ever*.

—DAVID WALTERS



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THIS MONTH IN ADVERTISING » As a graphic designer, Shepard Fairey has helped market some of the biggest names around: Nike, Zeppelin, Guitar Hero. And with his new book, *E Pluribus Venom* (Gingko Press, \$30), Fairey has taken to branding America's great national ideas—capitalism, nationalism, militarism—with a series of subversive ads. You won't find much of the clear-eyed optimism of Fairey's Obama posters (not included in the book), but you will find America.



Fairey's branding strategies for (clockwise from above) American authoritarianism, police brutality, Barack Obama, and war-torn Iraq.

EVERYDAY DRINKING

KINGSLEY AMIS

(Books)

Drink Like a Novelist

KINGSLEY AMIS'S drink writing is better than anybody else's, ever—even though there wasn't a single cocktail or category of booze he could write about without making a grievous factual error. No matter. Because Amis's writing on the topic, now collected as *Everyday Drinking* (Bloomsbury, \$20), isn't really about drinks at all, it's about drinking. Big difference.

For Amis, who wrote most of the pieces in this collection in the 1970s, a stiff glass of something alcoholic was essential to civilized life. Make that two glasses, or three. Modern mixographers, writing in an age in which alcoholism is frowned upon, give the sense that they would always prefer one perfect cocktail to however many decent ones. Not Amis. As one of his indispensable *General Principles* states: "Up to a point go for quantity rather than quality." And once he had those drinks in him, he was ready to teach you a thing or two. How to get your friends out of the house with your stash of good liquor intact. What it means to be British. Why certain things—drinks, entire nationalities—are simply unspeakable. And how to write about a technical subject without being an insufferable geek about it. —DAVID WONDRICH



KINGSLEY AMIS

PERRY ELLIS





PERRY ELLIS

ALVIN AILEY

AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



50
YEARS

1958-1959
1960-1961

Presented by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Tanqueray
No. TEN

I like to wear my rack.
It makes me feel outdoorsy.



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Das Auto.



(Books)

Two Dudes from the West

In his new memoir, *The Good Fight*—written with *Esquire* executive editor Mark Warren and published by Putnam in May—Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, of Nevada, vividly describes his contentious relationship with President Bush. In one passage, adapted here, Reid describes his first meeting with the President after the 2006 election, in which the Democrats took control of both houses of Congress.

A FEW DAYS AFTER the election—the election that President Bush described as a “thumping” for Republicans—I met with the President at the White House. In spite of his word after the 2004 election that he wanted to work with the Congress, he had done no such thing. It is a myth that Bush has ever possessed the skills required for working in a bipartisan manner. In Washington, he’s never had to, because the Republi-

can Congress had always been a ready rubber stamp. And so now in defeat, the President was in the unfamiliar position of straining for comity. Unpracticed at humility, Bush’s appeal was not very convincing. “You’re from the West. I’m from the West,” he said to me. “We’re both just two dudes from the West.”

I hoped his overture was genuine this time. I would have stopped at nothing to meet him in the middle if he had followed through. But I’d seen this before and was dubious that he was sincere. And in any case, our life experiences as “two dudes from the West” could not have been more different. I never went to Kennebunkport as a kid. I never went anywhere. And I’ve got no blue blood in my veins—just some desert sand. So as he and I sat there in the Oval Office, I said little in return. I hadn’t done well for Nevada in the House and Senate for more than two decades by being false, and I wasn’t going to start now. Even if it meant a somewhat awkward moment with the President of the United States.

All-Adjective Reviews: Debut Fiction

THE ROAT (Knopf, \$23). Short stories by Nam Le



Leering.
Sepia-toned.
Dark. Dark.
Dark. Dark.
Light. Well-crafted.

Intricately cut, sanded, seamed, and stained. Striking. Aggressively schizophrenic. Crayola-esque (characters). Jim Shepard-esque (range).

THE END (Graywolf, \$24), by Salvatore Scibona



Engulfing.
Entangled.
Fate-aden.
Flinty.
Dry-eyed.
Memento

meets *Augie March*. Dion meets Hitchcock. Serpentine. Alien. American. On loan. McCarthyite (Cormac). Bellowed (Saul).

SOUND TRACK TO THIS ISSUE

Go back to the cover, begin music, start flipping. This story will cost you \$6.93.

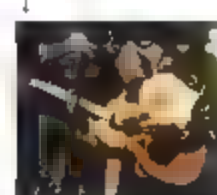
BY ANDY LANGER

“The Armo,” Islands
The perfect balance of cinematic and hummable. Smaller than Arcade Fire, Islands summons up a similarly powerful racket. (This Way In)



“Your New Man,” Mason Jennings
Part talking blues, part pop sing-along, an absurdly goofy take on the battle of the sexes targeting an underutilized folk: the guy dating your ex. (Ten Things You Don’t Know About Women)

“Highly Suspicious,” My Morning Jacket
Falsetto-fueled funk that sounds unlike anything you’d expect from My Morning Jacket. On an album overflowing with surprises, this is the sweetest. (“What I Learned Looking for Steve Fossell”)

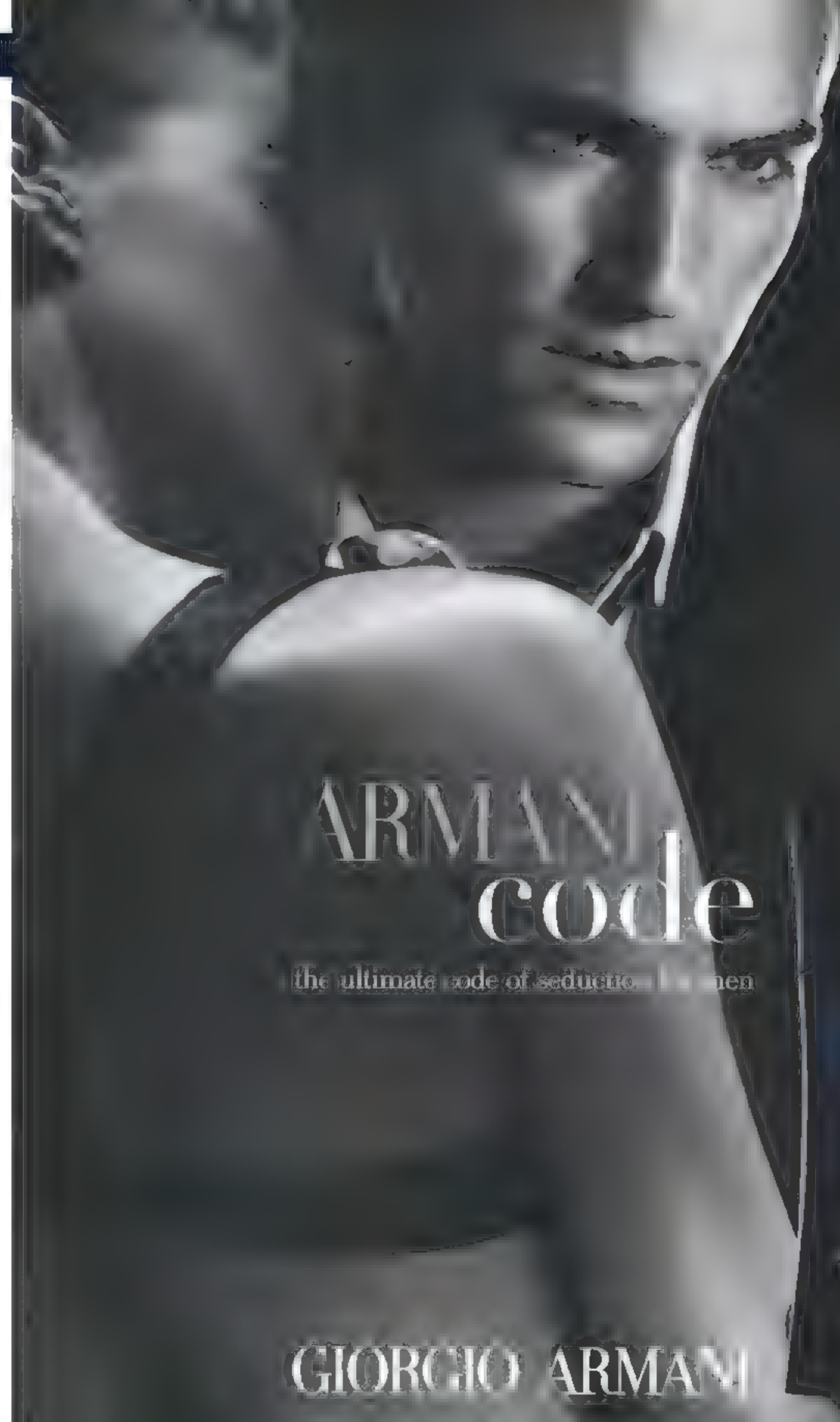


“You Only Call Me When You’re Drunk,” Ed Harcourt
A public-service announcement from one of Britain’s most dour troubadours that sometimes taking your buddy’s keys isn’t enough. Take the phone, too. (Esquire’s Best Bars in America)

“Strange Victory, Strange Defeat,” Silver Jews
From the delightfully deranged mind of David Berman comes the tale of imported squirrels that represent change we can believe in. (“The Cynic and Senator Obama”)

“More Clothes,” Tim Fite
His new album, *Fair Ain’t Fair*, confirms that this enigmatic, genre-bending songwriter is one of rock n’ roll’s most subversive renaissance men. A sarcastic ode to the sartorially obsessive (“The Obscure Sportsman’s Guide to Wearing White”)

“Shoulda Known,” Atmosphere
This Minneapolis-based hip-hop duo’s new single is as memorable as the album’s title: *When Life Gives You Lemons, You Punt That Shit Cold, Amen*. (This Way Out)



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Will You Ever Run for President?

By Brian Frazer

1. Your town is on fire. What do you do?

- (A) Grab the dog and get the hell out! (-3)
- (B) Watch it on the news while continuing to study for my law degree. (3)
- (C) Stand on the nearest fire truck and promise to catch Osama. (10)

2. How good are you at being vague?

- (A) On a scale of one to ten, a 4.7. (-5.7)
- (B) Better than what's-his-name but not as good as what's-his-face. (3)
- (C) It depends on your definition of vague. (5)

3. When you feel like saying something, what do you do?

- (A) Say it! (-15)
- (B) Think about it again and again and again in my head, then keep my mouth shut and let someone else say stuff. (5)
- (C) Check with focus groups to see if what I'm thinking will rock the boat, or even shake the raft. (9)

4. How would you best describe your handshake?

- (A) I only high-five. (-7)
- (B) Firm yet compassionate and tender. (3)
- (C) Atomic. (9)

5. What is your stance on immigrants?

- (A) Love 'em! How else could I get my lawn cut for six bucks? (-2)
- (B) Immigration is important to this nation, but everyone needs to fill out the proper paperwork and write neatly and legibly. (2)
- (C) They need to build us a wall at the Mexico border, then get the hell out of our great nation! (7)

6. What characteristics set you apart from others?

- (A) My giant feet. (-3)
- (B) My unwavering ability to waver. (3)
- (C) I have a super-loud voice and I own a bus. (5)

7. How many skeletons are in your closet?

- (A) Stabbed a whore in Brussels, but I did my time. (-20)
- (B) My sister's friend's aunt's best friend cheated on her college entrance exams. (3)
- (C) How many are in yours, pal? (13)

8. When was the last time you changed your mind on a position?

- (A) Last week, when I decided to get butter-scotch chips instead of sprinkles. (0)
- (B) After we discovered that Iraq had the same number of WMD as unicorns. (5)
- (C) When I was ten, I was against the flat tax; by 11, I was for it. Next question. (25)

9. Circle all of the following that you consider fun.

- (A) Begging strangers for money (5)
- (B) Extradition (9)
- (C) Letting pols dictate my meals (17)
- (D) Riding in a bus while wearing a suit (8)
- (E) Retaining control of my soul (-52)
- (F) Distancing myself from people I've known for 20 years (3)

10. How do you feel about extramarital affairs?

- (A) My third one: awesome. (-19)
- (B) They don't count unless you get her pregnant. (-4)
- (C) Stone the adulterers. (16)

11. Complete the sentence. I feel that taxes _____.

- (A) are not that much fun to pay (-8)
- (B) are way too low for the rich (6)
- (C) need to be cut in half to stimulate the economy like lubricant in a Nascar engine (19)

12. How do you feel about God?

- (A) What God? (-19)
- (B) My God is a kind and benevolent God. (10)
- (C) I go to church every Sunday during election years. (10)

ANSWER KEY (Total the corresponding scores for each answer.)

Fewer than 0 points

Of course not schmuck! I'm not gonna spend four years raising \$400 million for a \$400,000 job.

0 to 50 points

Yes, but only so I can cross it off my bucket list

51 points or more

Yes! And I've been told I'm already 31 percentage points ahead of Jim Webb in the 2016 Delaware primaries!

WHAT THE F%\$# IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?

Candid responses to a perplexing reality—from an expert and a comedian



MAJOR HUMAN FLAW:

Some people talk on their cell phones at the movies.

RESPONSE NO. 1, by Rich Ling, sociologist and author of *New Tech, New Ties: How Mobile Communication Is Reshaping Social Cohesion*: There's a mismatch between people's understanding of what's going on around them and their need to be in touch with other people. When someone calls you or texts you, it's a random positive reinforcement, a little gift. "Somebody's noticing me and that makes me feel important." Being noticed by other people is a real narcotic. You have to weigh the importance of your social life with your involvement in the collective film-watching experience. We need a balance between appropriate use and tolerant expectations.

RESPONSE NO. 2, by Mike Birbiglia, stand-up comedian whose DVD *What I Should Have Said* was in stores now: I was at a movie recently, and the guy next to me answered his phone during the movie. And he answered it by saying, and I quote, "Who 'dis?" So not only was he willing to talk to someone during the movie, but he was willing to talk to anyone during the movie. He didn't care "who 'das." (I'm not sure what the past tense of 'dis is.) It could be a collection agency, and he'd be like, "What up?" And they'd be like, "Is this a bad time?" And he'd be like, "Naw, I'm just watching *Divine Bell and the Butterfly*."

Next time: Blog commenters.



Cartier

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Funny* Joke from a Beautiful Woman

As told by
MARISA MILLER

WHAT A WOMAN SAYS:

"This place is a mess! C'mon, you and I need to clean up. Your stuff is lying on the floor, and you'll have no clothes to wear if we don't do laundry right now!"

WHAT A MAN HEARS:

"Blah, blah, blah, blah. C'MON, YOU AND I, blah, blah, blah, ON THE FLOOR, blah, blah, blah, NO CLOTHES, blah, blah, blah, blah, RIGHT NOW"

ABOUT THE JOKESTER:

Way back in November 2006, we named Marisa Miller an "Obscure Woman We Love." Dozens of Victoria's Secret modeling jobs and one cover of *S*'s swimsuit issue later, the 29-year-old Santa Cruz native is significantly less obscure. She now has the liberty to do projects that are close to home and heart. Like designing a shoe line for Vans. Her day job is still "model," however. A healthy, beautiful model. "Since I'm not in high fashion, everybody wants me to have my curves," she says. Esquire's new favorite modeling category: low-to-medium fashion.

BUDDY KITE

*Esquire cannot guarantee that this joke will be funny to everyone.



TOPICS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

>> Documentary? No such thing >> Texas counts as the West?
>> What is it about women with the last name Miller? >> And the first name Marisa, now that we think about it. >> And the whole first-name, last-name alliteration thing. Huh

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Man at His Best

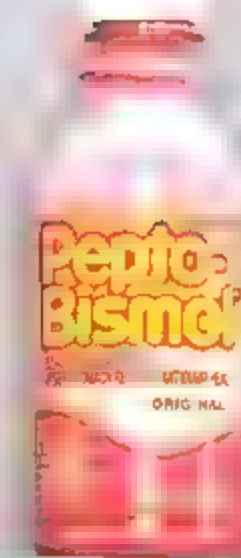
The Instructions 2

MY MEDICINE CABINET

By Dr. Mehmet Oz

Well, it's not my medicine cabinet! – I don't allow photographers into the sacred place where I floss, tweeze, and poop – but it's a good facsimile. First thing you'll notice. It may look like yours. That's part of the point – it's nice to know that if your doctor has a headache, he pops an Advil. But you'll find a new discovery or two, and penetrating medical insights into the stuff you use all the time. A note on organization. Usually when you see this view, you're at your foggiest. I arrange my cabinet so that when I need something, I don't have to think. Open door, grab item, close door.

Dr. Oz is a heart surgeon and the coauthor of *You: Staying Young*.



PEPTO-BISMOL: Many stomachaches are actually food poisoning. There's a constant war between bad bacteria and good. The bismuth in Pepto kills the invader and soothes you.

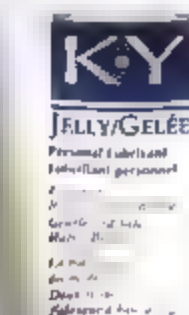
ASPIRIN: If you're over 35, take two baby aspirins a day. I do. It thins the blood and kills inflammation, which causes the visible signs of aging.



BAND-AIDS: Fresh air is good for a cut. Accidentally reopening a wound isn't. Band-Aids protect, but they're not occlusive, which means they don't suffocate.

IBUPROFEN: Besides headache, works on exercise-induced muscle aches. If I'm going to do a tough workout, I take it before or after. The risk is kidney problems, so drink water and don't exceed the daily dosage.

K-Y JELLY: Chief benefit: It's not petroleum-based. You don't want petroleum in your blood stream – and neither does the person you're sleeping with.



THERMACARE: For any lower back or muscle pain, use these self-heating wraps. Their tiny iron particles undergo a quick rusting process and generate warmth without burning your skin. Or try two: wrap of Epsom salt in a hot bath.

ARNICA: The two best things about this homeopathic muscle cream: 1) It's homeopathic, and 2) you need someone to rub it on you. The massage actually stimulates your tissues to release toxins.



TIGER BALM: Localized muscle-relieving heat. It's actually a Chinese herb remedy developed in Burma more than 100 years ago. It does lots of people using it. Southern is the best.

TOM'S TOOTHPASTE: Tom makes a paste that's free of a chemical called SLS, which does two things: It creates foam when you brush, and it can cause mouth sores. You don't need foam – people just like it – and you certainly don't need mouth sores.



BURT'S BEES LIP BALM: Burt avoids synthetic materials that can get absorbed through the lips. Don't use it every day, but in the winter it's fine.

TOOTHBRUSH: Bristles: soft or extra-soft. And don't brush your teeth like you're scrubbing a toilet. Do it carefully. Change your toothbrush every two months and don't share.



DENTAL FLOSS: Bacteria festers between teeth and leads to gingivitis. This you know. Gingivitis is a chronic infection that stimulates your immune system to overreact, quite possibly leading to increased heart attacks and stroke. Do you realize did not know?

¹"Medicine cabinet" is a misnomer. Store prescriptions and other medicines in a cool, dry place.

> Gardening for Men

ASK A LANDSCAPER

By Frank Contey

I just bought a really big grill, and I want to have people over to barbecue. I want to make my yard look good, maybe even interesting. Ideas?

1) Plant annuals. As in flowers. Annuals give you a huge shot of color. Ask the nursery for ones labeled "Proven Winners."

2) Add stones. I'm always looking for unusual stones to introduce into a landscape. Once, doing an excavation, I found a boulder as big as a car hood, trucked it into a yard, and set it next to a patio to work as a seating rock. But you can find great stones at any stone yard.

3) Bring furniture outside. If you're having people over, bring out dining tables, vases, candleholders, lamps. It creates a surprising dynamic.

My lawn seems to dry out in the summer. What's going on? Summer dormancy—it's natural. You want to water more deeply but less often, a total of an inch a week, including rainfall. And don't overcut. A lawn that's 3 to

ANATOMY OF A WALL

BACK PITCH: Slight backward lean built into wall. Important.

DRY-STACKED FIELDSTONE: One ton per 10 to 15 square feet of wall face. Indispensable.

FLOWERS: Optional.

TOPSOIL: At least eight inches. Desirable.

FABRIC BARRIER: Separates gravel and soil. Recommended.

CLEAN GRAVEL BACKFILL: Helps drainage. Strongly recommended.

COMPACTED GRAVEL BASE: A few inches. Strongly recommended.

For more on wall building, go to esquire.com/wall-construction.

3 1/2 inches high will retain moisture and look greener. Also, add organic matter by leaving some mower clippings in the lawn. I grew up in an Italian neighborhood, and none of the old guys on my block ever used a catcher on their mowers. They'd rake up most of the clippings, but they'd leave a little to settle into the lawn. You go past my mother's house to this day and the lawns are all perfect. And you never see a landscaper on the block.

I'm looking for a backyard project with impressive results. Any suggestions? Back when I used to spend most of my day working in the field, a dry-laid stone retaining wall was my favorite task. Put me on a stone wall. And you can handle it—you just have to man up. "Dry laid" means there's no mortar holding the stones together—it's all gravity. You see these walls all over England,

where they were built hundreds of years ago to keep sheep in, and they're still standing.

Here are the things you need to know: **1) Recruit friends.** Make it a barbecue-and-beer thing. **2) After the stone is delivered,** spread it out; you'll need to see all the pieces. **3) Once you dig a trench** for the footing and set a base course, you're ready to build the wall up. Now you're looking at this big pile of rocks and thinking, What the hell do I do now? Well, I like a lot of things in life, we won't know until we do something, so let's just do something. Pick up a stone and put it in place. Does it look good? If not, try another. **4) When it looks good,** make it stable. You don't want it rocking back and forth, so as with a wobbly table in a restaurant, you shim it, only not with a sugar packet, with one of the smaller stones from the pile. **5) Each stone you set** must be level; use a level. **6) As you add layers of**

stone, you want to overlap the seams of the layer below, like bricks in a house. **7) Keep doing that,** working across, creating highs and lows in the guts of the wall with varied-size stone so it doesn't look planned. Sometimes guys get what we call stone blind from looking at the pile too long—they just can't find the right piece. Walk away for ten minutes, maybe grab a beer, then come back. It'll be there. **8) When you're done,** you should be able to walk on top of the wall and not feel it shift. You'll know you're working well when piecing the wall together begins to have a calming, almost meditative effect on you. Or maybe that's just the beer.

Frank Contey is a founding partner of the Landscape Guild and Terra Graphics, two landscape design and construction firms based in Montclair, New Jersey. If you have questions for Frank, go to esquire.com/talk.

TOOL OF THE MONTH The hori hori, a Japanese utility knife. It's a concave, razor-sharp, seven-inch stainless-steel blade that digs, cuts roots, and has a measurement gauge right on it. Makes planting pansies a lot more satisfying. (\$35; wildflowerseed.com)

MINOR CATASTROPHE NO. 221:

PEOPLE HATE YOUR STEAKS

Consultant: Steve Greer, chef and owner of the Golden Ox in Kansas City, Missouri



{1} Use hardwood charcoal. It burns hotter. And wait until the flames have died down before cooking, you want to sear the meat, not char it.



{2} Grill for four to six minutes per side. Flip it too soon and you won't get a good crust. Flip it more than once and you'll lose all the juices.



{3} Make the okay sign with your thumb and index finger and poke the base of your thumb. That's what rare steak feels like. Using an okay sign with the middle finger will give you the feel of medium-rare, and so on.



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» THE SUGGESTION Shredding for the Soul

THERE WAS A TIME when I didn't much worry about identity theft. If a thief was unlucky enough to take on my mountain of debt, the joke was on him. Eventually, though, I had something to lose (not much, but something), and since my identity comes equipped with deep-seated paranoia, I bought myself a paper shredder. What I got was a mechanical therapist.

Shredding is no longer obligatory. I shred for joy in this age of permanence, where people can find out where you went to school, where you work, the woman you're dating, and where the woman you're dating works and went to school, few things are as soul-nourishing as the physical eradication of information. As I drop a bank statement or credit-card offer (or even better, a credit card) into my cross-cutting beast, and it makes that horrible noise, eliminating the detritus of the modern world, I feel the stress leaving my body. I'm negating my identity. How Zen is that?

—DAVID KATZ

THE RULES

Rule No. 902 Be skeptical of the man with memorable hair.

Rule No. 941 Every immigrant who ever made something of himself in America had \$20 in his pocket when he got here.

Rule No. 967 Recumbent bicyclists always look smug.

>The Digital Man THE BARRY™

By Barry Sonnenfeld

Having just tested two great laptop bodies and one great operating system, I'd be in heaven if I were the Dr. Frankenstein of computing. I'd combine the body of one and the brain of the other into the ultimate computer. What might surprise you, though, is that I'd use the body of a Lenovo ThinkPad X300 and the brain of a MacBook Air. I'd call it the Barry! The (a) MacBook Air (\$1,799; apple.com) is revolutionary. The backlit keypad and multitouch trackpad work well, and its Leopard operating system is unparalleled. The problems with the Air are the same things that make it so great—its thinness and beautiful shape require some sacrifices. Since it has no DVD player, you must wirelessly beam programs onto the Air by placing the software in the DVD drive of another computer (Mac or PC). Steve Jobs has always been ahead of the curve (Macs were one of the first computers to ship without a floppy drive), and at the last D: All Things Digital conference, where he shared the stage with Bill Gates, every other word was about "the cloud"—the Internet, where all your future software will be kept. Still, the Air's lack of a DVD drive, inability to swap batteries, and hard-to-access USB port make it just less than perfect. The Air is the most beautiful laptop ever designed, but with a bag of drives, cables, cheaters, and extenders, it's a little like a supermodel who requires an

entourage of hair and makeup people.

The (b) Lenovo X300 (\$2,936; lenovo.com) is the best PC laptop ever made. It is almost as light as the Air (though not quite Museum of Modern Art-worthy) but comes with a superthin, built-in DVD drive, three USB ports, an Ethernet port, and WiMax (basically super-long-range WiFi), and an optional wireless cellular modem and wireless USB. The backlit screen is LED, producing a sharp, bright image with less battery drain. And the keyboard, as on all Lenovos, is perfect.

So why the need for the Barry? Well, in my case, I was able to test the Lenovo X300 with the old Microsoft XP operating system, which I have learned to live with. But at some point soon, Microsoft is going to stop selling XP, and buying a Lenovo with Vista is like buying a Ferrari with square tires. Or a G-IV jet with wings made out of dump trucks. I really can't think of another important device or service that is as morally bankrupt, stupid, and plain worthless as Microsoft's Vista. Someone should do jail time.

So grab an X300 running XP before it's too late. Or if you're a Mac guy and don't mind lugging around a DVD drive and a few cables, the Air is amazing. But let's see if we can get someone to make the Barry. That would be perfection.

Barry Sonnenfeld is the director of *Men in Black* and *RV* and the executive producer of *Pushing Daisies*.

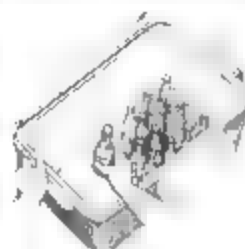
MINOR CATASTROPHE NO. 243:

YOUR COOLER'S TOO SMALL

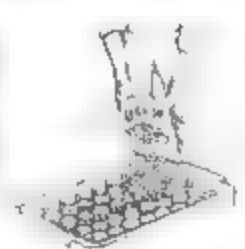
Consultant: Pablaux
Johnson, author of
Gameday Gourmet



(1)
First, chill
everything
overnight.
Stuff that
starts cold
has a better
chance of
staying cold.



(2)
Cover the base with a
layer of cans or bottles.
Cans go on their sides.
Bottles go straight up,
side by side. Fill the gaps
with upside-down
bottles. Check for malt
liquor and discard.



(3)
Cover with ice, and
repeat the layering
until the cooler fills
up. If there's room
left over, throw in a
Capri Sun for
the driver.

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>Answer Fella

BIG BREAKFASTS, DINNER DATES, FISH & THE DISHES

ESQUIRE'S ANSWER FELLA believes that there are no stupid questions, just stupid people who don't ask questions, fearing they'll look stupid. So ask Answer Fella anything. If he doesn't know the answer, he'll find out who does or who has a guess that sounds right.

Why is the word *lumberjack* synonymous with a huge breakfast? I

get that I'm supposed to be reminded of a massive, ax-wielding man fueled by large portions of food, but why no *Bricklayer's Brunch*? Sadly, the origin of the Lumberjack Breakfast is shrouded in myth. Even worse—Canadian myth, that singular mixture of woodsy warmth, inchoate mystery, and bovine dullness.

Several sources claim the first Lumberjack's (or Logger's) Breakfast—eggs galore, assorted fried pork strips, slabs,

and slices, plus flapjacks—was served by a Vancouver hotel circa 1870, but Anita Stewart, cookbook author and an authority on Canuck cuisine, can't confirm this. She does, however, cite a colleague who mentioned an 80-plus-year-old Vancouver hash house that still dishes up a "Yukon-Style" breakfast.

"Hearty," says Stewart. "To allow the guys to get into the bush and do the logging—the tradition of hearty cooking begins with hard outdoor work."

That tradition ends, of course, at Denny's, where "hard outdoor work" consists of picking up trash in the parking lot, and

where the Lumberjack Slam—two pancakes, two eggs, two sausage links, two bacon strips, a grilled ham slice, taters (or grits), and toast—supplies 1,313 calories, 3,602 milligrams of sodium, and almost twice the amount of cholesterol the FDA suggests you ingest daily. So next time you head into the bush, you may want to tote a defibrillator along with your ax—or just go light with the Editor's Plate: two shriveled grapes and a wee red banana.

My last girlfriend insisted that I order first when we were at a restaurant. Now I'm seeing other women, and recently, when I went ahead and ordered first, my date said that I was rude to do so. Is there a rule about this? There was a rule. Once upon a time, there were plenty of

rules, and they worked just fine. But that was long ago, when highways had passing lanes instead of pinballing morons, and the president of the United States spoke in complete sentences.

Cindy Grosso, founder of the Charleston School of Protocol and Etiquette—AF's old-school touchstone on these matters—still plays by those rules. "Social etiquette means chivalry. The man pulls out the chair for the woman, the man holds the door, and if he asked her out, she orders first."

But Leah Ingram, author of *The Everything Etiquette Book*, insists, "There are two ways to handle who orders first. Follow the lead of the server—whom does he or she address first?—or for the guy, if the server addresses him first, to defer to his date. Why don't you go ahead? or 'Do you know what you want?' If you ask questions, you should be okay."

And should your date go with the Lumberjack Breakfast, prepare for a long haul in the bush.

Why is the smell of fish so strong when it's cooked? The house smells of fish for days afterward—so why doesn't the same thing happen with chocolate-chip cookies?

Science, my friend—science. What you're smelling, according to George Preti, organic chemist at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia, is principally a chemical compound called trimethylamine

oxide, used by saltwater fish "to regulate their internal osmotic pressure. Trimethylamine has a low olfactory threshold—you don't need too much of it to get a strong whiff—and it tends to stick to surfaces because of its [chemical] structure. To get it off kitchen surfaces, you can just use lemon juice."

As for cookies, says Preti, "Different compounds, different volatile odorants. I can smell chocolate-chip cookies baking a long way away."

Like a group of ninjas battling a protagonist one by one, a customer with no money washing dishes to pay his restaurant bill seems like it only happens in movies. Do restaurants actually do this?

"No, we don't," says Helen Swayngim, a manager at the Tom Jones diner in Brookhaven, Pennsylvania. "We usually just take a driver's license, and they usually come back for that."

"No," says Renate Gonzalez, co-owner of New York City's Empire Diner. "We never let them go into the kitchen. God forbid that somebody would get hurt or something. We try to give them a chance to come back and pay by holding something of theirs—a driver's license or a cell phone."

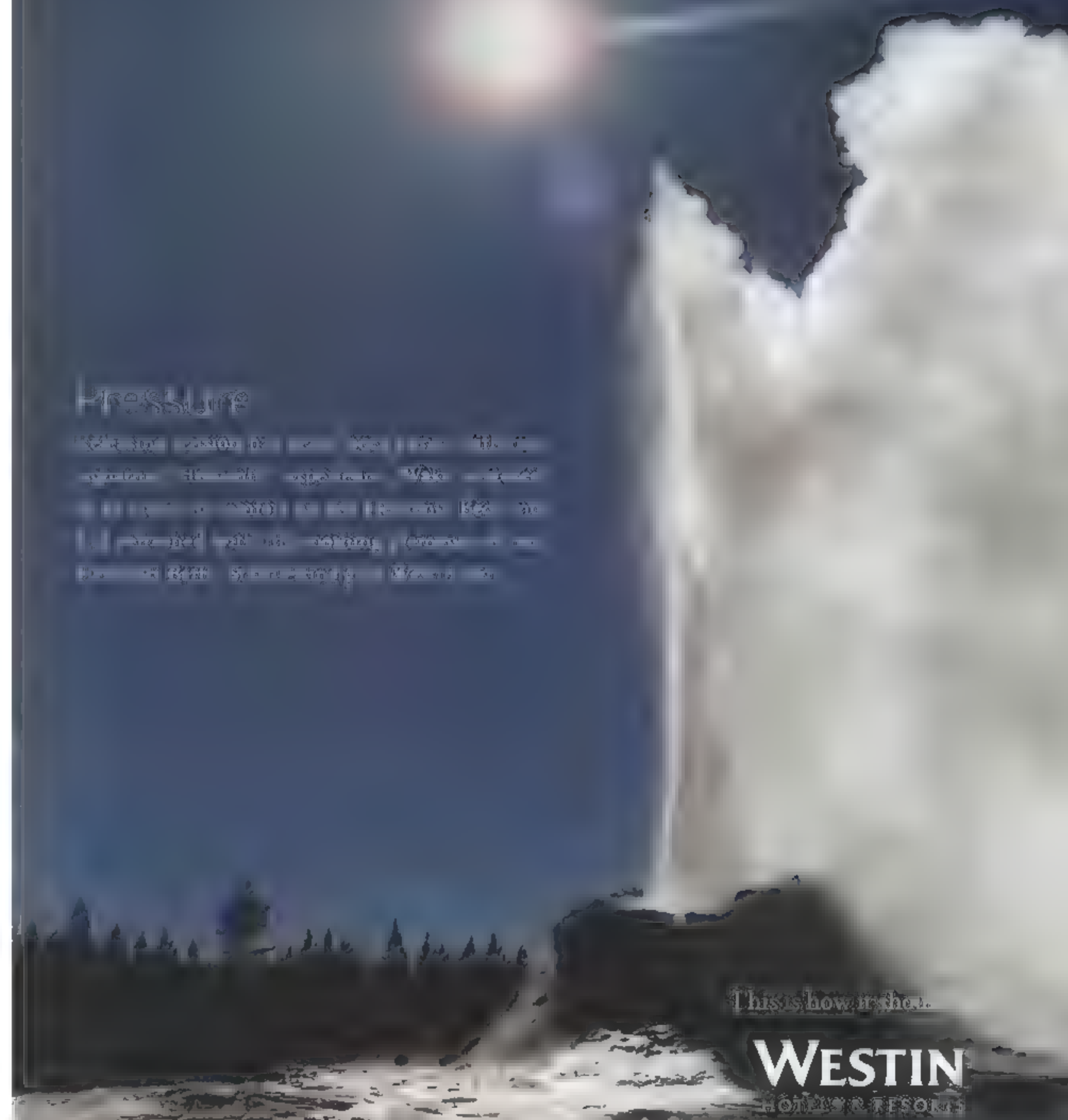
"We don't do it anymore," says Melissa Mattson, general manager of Mickey's Diner in St. Paul, Minnesota. "But we have done it in the past—and we actually have someone now working for us who is a product of it. He was working as a dishwasher, and the manager hired him the next day. But we don't do that anymore."

Pete Jordan, author of *Dishwasher: One Man's Quest to Wash Dishes in All Fifty States*, tells AF, "Somebody sent me a letter once, saying a restaurant in Montreal had a sign up that said, 'If you can't pay, you'll have to wash dishes,'" but Jordan himself has no firsthand knowledge of the practice.

"That was one thing I wanted to try—to eat the meal and then claim I couldn't pay, and expect to be forced to wash the dishes. But I never did follow through with it."

By the way, don't miss Jordan's new book, *Lumberjack: One Man's Quest for Death by Pork*.

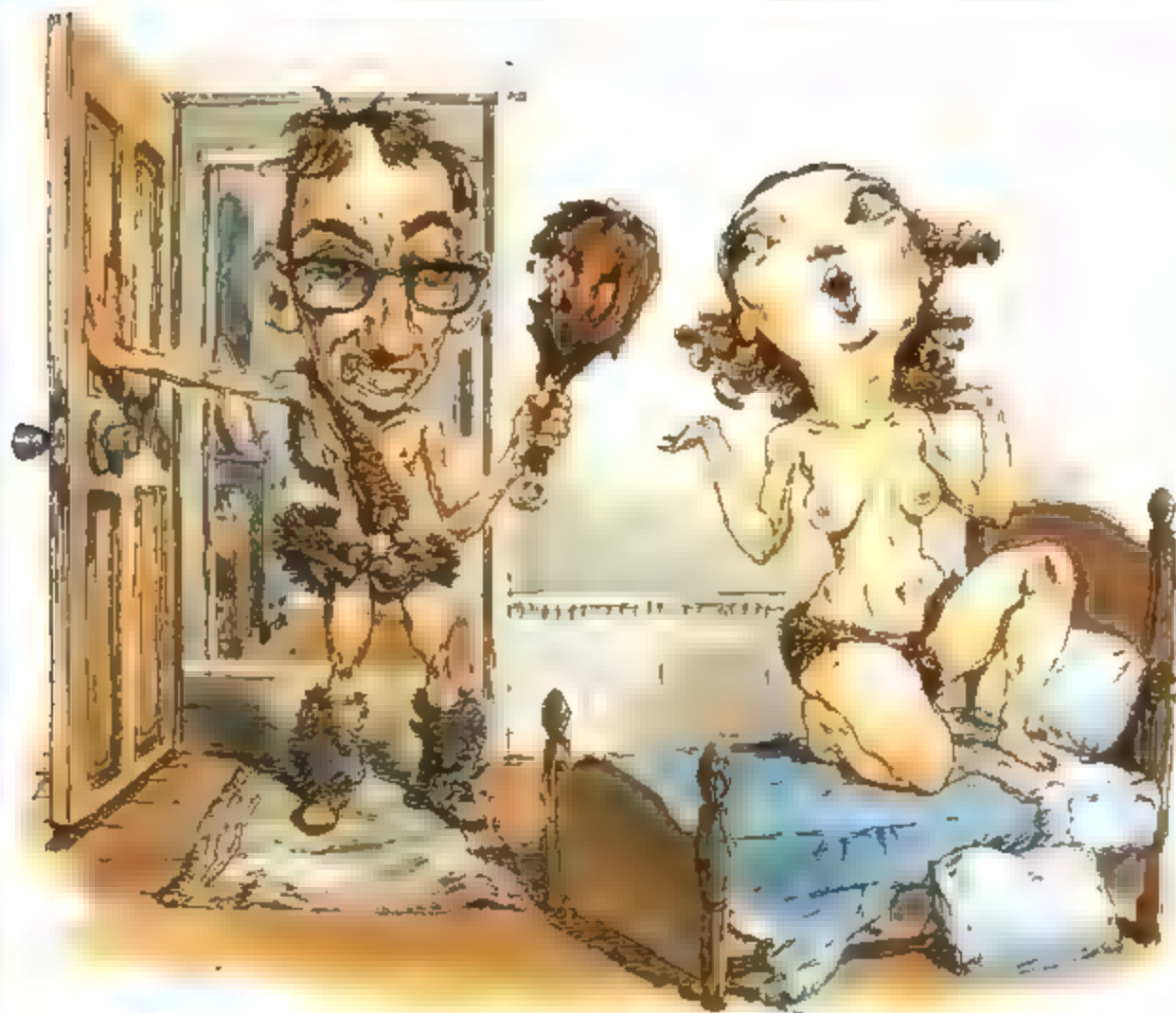
Got a question? Send it to Answer Fella via esquire.com/talk.



This is how it's done.

WESTIN

HOMES & RESORTS



>Sex

By Stacey Grenrock Woods

I've been with my girlfriend for four months. Everything was perfect until she wanted to change foreplay. What does she mean by "rough"? I feel frustrated and lost.

There is nothing wrong with the way you do foreplay, Timmy, so dry your eyes and listen to Jay Wiseman, the nice S&M man and author of *SM 101: A Realistic Introduction*. "First of all, I have no idea what the term 'rough foreplay' means." Gruff as he seems, Wiseman has a point. Googling "rough sex" gets you a link to "rough blowjobs gagging throat," right at position one, just as I remember. Has your girlfriend ever mentioned wanting any rough blowjobs during these four halcyon months?

I ask purely out of concern for everyone's safety. "Engaging in S&M play is kinda like going scuba diving," says Wiseman. (Except that it's not—beyond the clothes.) "You don't wanna just plunge in in an uneducated sort of way." I'll just assume she's up for a little BDSM, which is a shorter, more-disciplined way of identifying the sexual practices stemming from bondage, discipline, domination, submission, sadism, and masochism. Most BDSMers advocate the use of "safe words." (The ones who don't are tech-

nically assailants and are best avoided.) Guy Sanders, or "Sir Guy," as he's known around the dungeon, is a member of the Eulenspiegel Society, the dominant BDSM education and support organization in America. He suggests the "green, yellow, red" trilogy of safe words but recommends you and Sally acquaint yourselves with BDSM by taking a class or reading books on the subject. BDSM is a highly principled discipline, and, as Wiseman warns, "You deviate from those principles at your peril." (Oh, do I now? Well, maybe I need help. I'm a bit green, if you know what I mean.) "In *SM 101*," he goes on, "there's actually a 16-point checklist." (Checklists? Who said anything about paperwork? Yellow!) "And, the principles: Discuss [things] ahead of time, get consent, avoid use of intoxicants. . . . What? Support groups, 'safe words,' syllabi, classes, and consent forms are one thing, but stone-cold sobriety? Red! Red, red, red

I get hard when my wife and I have sex, but about two minutes later, I go soft. Why?

Wow, that is some sparse modern verse. William Carlos Williams, eat your plums out! But about this dick thing: You are in the throes of erectile dysfunction. And to make things worse, you're what doctors call "spectatoring" (because doctors tend to play fast and loose with the English language). In other words, you worry about losing your erection, so now I'm worrying about it, and now every one's thinking about it and it's been built up too much. But take heed, gentle poet: Western medicine has a simple prescription pill (perhaps blue) to cure your ailment. See, good old Western medicine ain't so bad after all. I mean, you're not going to get hard with a ginseng root, are you? Not by eating it, anyway.

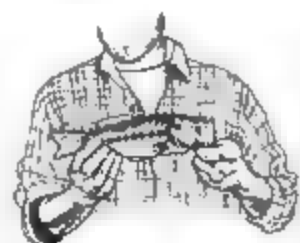
Please teach me ways (every possible way) to make a girl orgasm. I'm very desperate to please my girlfriend, and I feel like a failure right now. I will be forever grateful.

I do like gratitude, particularly eternal, but that's a tall order. Denise Greenfield, a men's intimacy coach of the tantric style, says, "Every woman is different. Every woman responds differently and opens differently. I liken us to different flowers." Yes, of course, flowers. "I don't think you can come up with an exact count," says sex Web site babeland.com's Anne Semans (no relation), "because every woman is different." Well, maybe not every woman, but we are all in agreement on this point: the clitoris. People are wont to describe the female orgasm as a peripatetic thing, occurring at times vaginally, anally, from the G-spot, orally (roughly), but really, it's the clit's night. Try rooting around there, see what happens. And please, Freudians, no letters.

Got a sex question of your own? Send it to us via esquire.com/talk.

MINOR CATASTROPHE NO. 317:

YOUR SMALL CATCH LOOKS EVEN SMALLER IN PICTURES



(1) Take your fish and hold it horizontally across your body with both hands. You'll do less damage to its internal organs than if you hold it vertically.



(2) Extend your arms as far out in front of you as possible. The closer your fish is to the camera, the bigger it will look.



(3) No matter how tight the fish, your face should convey as much excitement as strain. Half-smile, half-grimace—like someone told you a joke while you were carrying a sofa.

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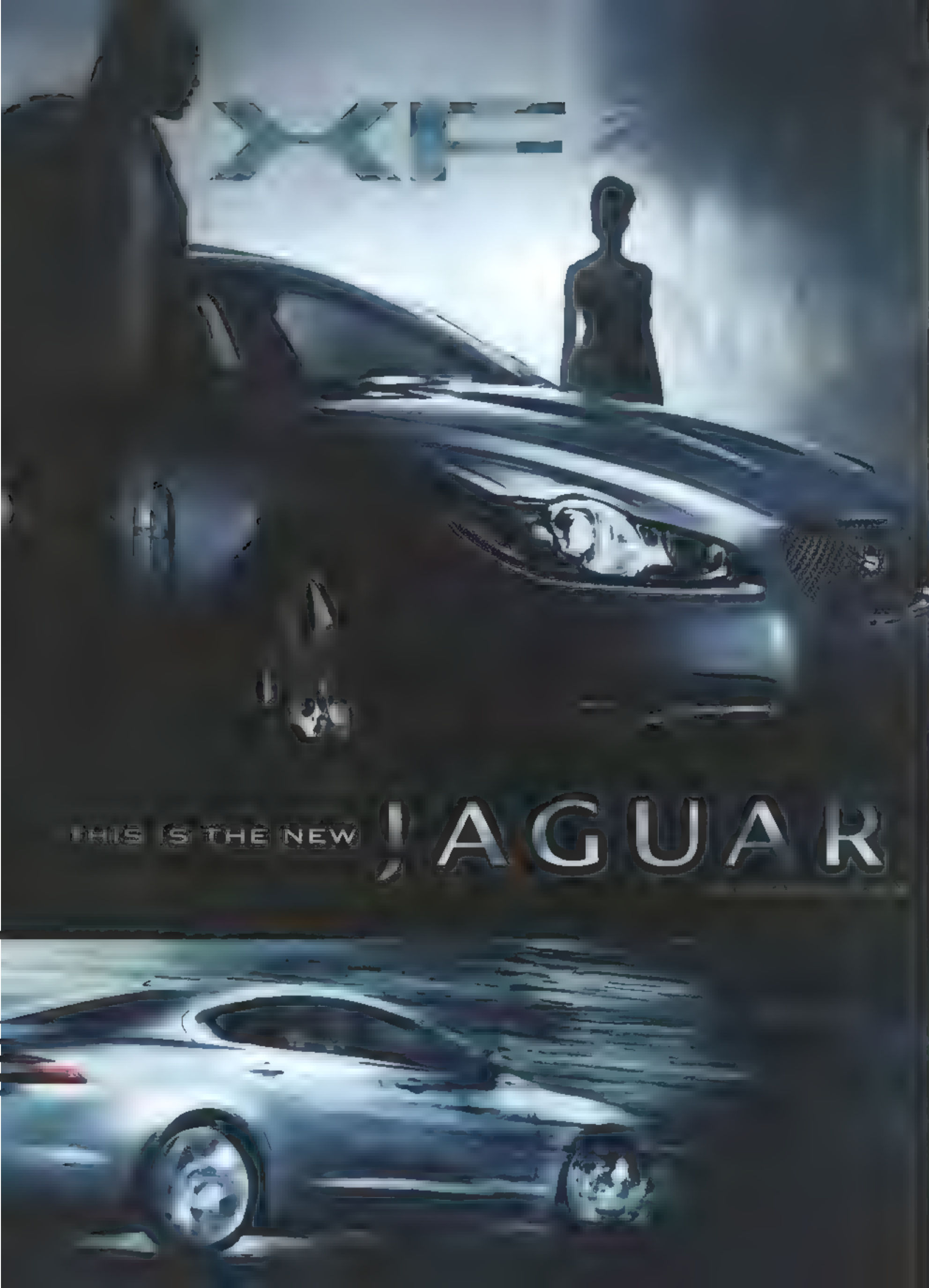
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Man at His Best Style 3

The Esquire Guide to Denim

EVERYONE HAS that one pair. You may own others, stacked in a high iron drawer in some many shades of blue, but when jeans are an option, you probably head straight for that one pair. They damn well better fit. They shouldn't sag in the seat of the crotch, and they shouldn't flare out like some twisted Travolta flashback—they should form to your contours like a good sweater. Also, make sure they're blue. You've got options, lots of them, so try for a medium blue, a shade like this that works for day and night. Rivets and stitching must be kept to a minimum; embellishments approached with extreme caution; and pockets limited to five. If you can find all this in one \$40 pair, pat yourself on the back and buy three more just like them. If, however, you can't seem to find a great pair for less than \$200, don't sweat it. You really only need that one pair.

Vintage straight-leg jeans (\$130 by Lucky Brand Jeans)

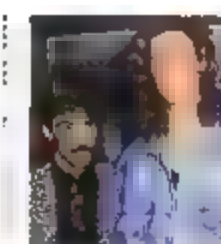
THE (VISUAL) LAWS OF DENIM



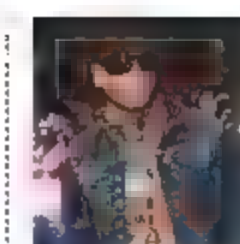
The hardest thing to wear with denim is more denim. (See Timberlake, J.)



Your jeans should never call to mind the cover of Sticky Fingers. (See Yoakam, D.)



No one has gotten laid wearing snow-washed denim since the '80s. (See Oates, Hall & Oates, L.)

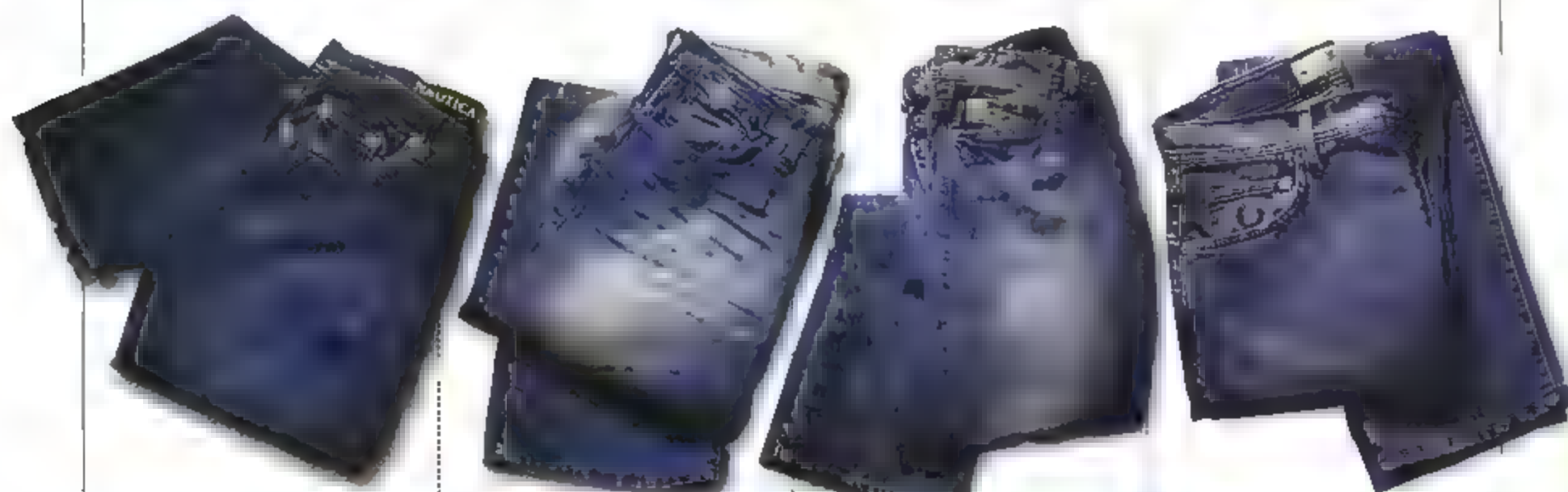


"Because Lenny Kravitz does it" is never a good excuse to do anything. (See Kravitz, L.)

THE ESQUIRE GUIDE to DENIM

Four Pairs, Four Prices

What to expect when you're spending...



\$50

WHAT YOU'RE GETTING:

Denim that's been hand-rubbed, distressed with sand, and machine washed with enzymes and other dyes.

WHAT YOU'RE NOT:

Since their straight fit has been designed to accommodate a wide range of body types, it might take longer to find a pair that fits just right.

Straight-leg jeans (\$50) by Nautica Jeans Co.

\$98

WHAT YOU'RE GETTING:

Details like whiskers on the hip and sanding patterns on the thigh. Also, notice the seam abrasions, which add a few years to the jeans' look.

WHAT YOU'RE NOT:

Simplicity. The more expensive the jeans, the more likely they'll have ornate detailing and stitching. For some folks, that's good, for others, not so much.

Jeans (\$98) by Guess.

\$210

WHAT YOU'RE GETTING:

Distressing and special washing that make for weathered color. Plus, Adidas and Diesel logos on the pockets and the interior of the ankle.

WHAT YOU'RE NOT:

Authenticity. You won't find many real cowboys in \$200 jeans, but unless you're a real cowboy, who cares?

Slim-fit jeans (\$210), Adidas Originals Denim by Diesel.

\$440

WHAT YOU'RE GETTING:

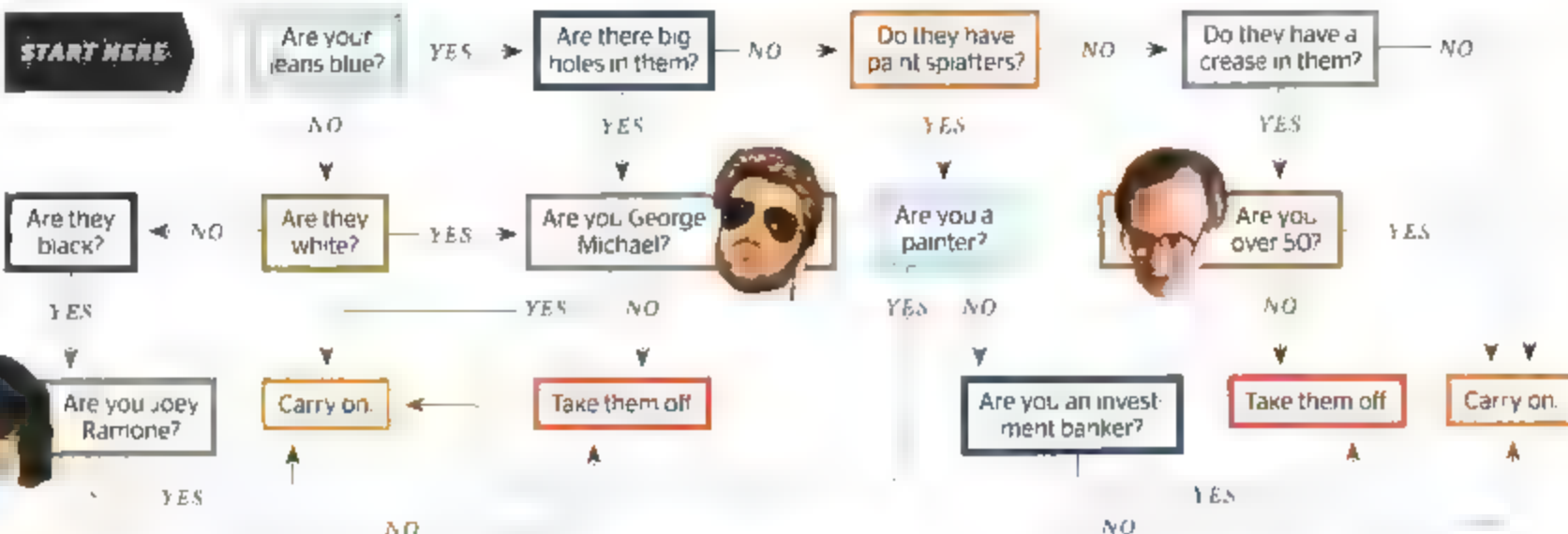
Japanese selvage denim, the most coveted denim in the world. The jeans also contain a tiny percentage of stretchy material, meaning they'll fit your body better than pure cotton.

WHAT YOU'RE NOT:

A bargain.

Jeans (\$440) by Borrelli.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS FOR A MAN in DENIM



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THREE WAYS to WEAR IT

Because you can't go out in just jeans

1. WITH CASUAL CLOTHES

Since darker denim tends to look more formal, loosen up with a pair of lighter blue jeans. Add patterns and colors as needed and try keeping that shirt tucked in.

Two-button wool-and-silk jacket (\$1,390) by Etro, cotton shirt (\$590) by Kition, jeans (\$168) by Levi's Capital E, silk pocket square (\$130) by Gucci, leather loafers (\$1,500) by Berluti.



2. WITH LEATHER

Black leather looks best with darker jeans, brown leather complements lighter pairs, red leather looks good with nothing and should be avoided.

Leather jacket (\$898) by Coach, cotton T-shirt (\$95) by Vince, jeans (\$98) by Hillfiger Denim, suede boots (\$310) by Grenson.



3. WITH WORK CLOTHES

Unless your job involves carrying heavy equipment for a band, keep your work jeans dark and simple. Indigo looks dressiest, especially when paired with black lace-ups and a navy-blue jacket.

Wool jacket (part of suit, \$1,695) by John Varvatos, shirt (\$165) by Dunhill, jeans (\$386) by Gilded Age, pocket square (\$60) by Robert Talbott, shoes (\$225) by Cole Haan.

THE ENDORSEMENT: The Unadorned Back Pocket



A MAN IN THE MARKET

for a fresh pair of blue jeans will encounter three categories of peculiar modern-day embellishments: 1) manufactured scuffs, 2) prewrinkled zones at the top of the thighs and behind the knees, and 3) creative back-pocket stitchery.

Regarding number 3: What the hell?

Somewhere along the line, the back pocket became a means of expression, a designer's playground. And it became a marketing tool, a way for brands to distinguish themselves. Appliqués, organic flourishes, intricately patterned landscapes of string and fabric. General whimsy.

On our asses, it should be noted, gentlemen. Our asses.

Maybe you're into elaborate back-pocket decoration. Maybe you're that kind of guy. Maybe you're also into ironing your jeans. Maybe you're from Denmark. I suspect that you aren't. I suspect you consider the Levi Strauss and Co.'s flying eagle pattern (b. 1873) to be as loud a message as you want the seat of your pants to deliver. For you, the subtle back pocket—that functional, innocuous denim envelope for your wallet—is a beautiful and increasingly rare thing (though it exists if you look hard enough).

And it's an elegant thing. It's a symbol of restraint, dignity, masculinity. In this age of embellishment, it's a quiet protest. Also, no whimsy.

—ROSS McCAMMON

Jeans (\$78) by Banana Republic.



The Aquatimer Automatic. Just like the original from 1967 you never owned because in those days there was only one way to impress girls.



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PILOT'S WATCH
HAND-WOUND



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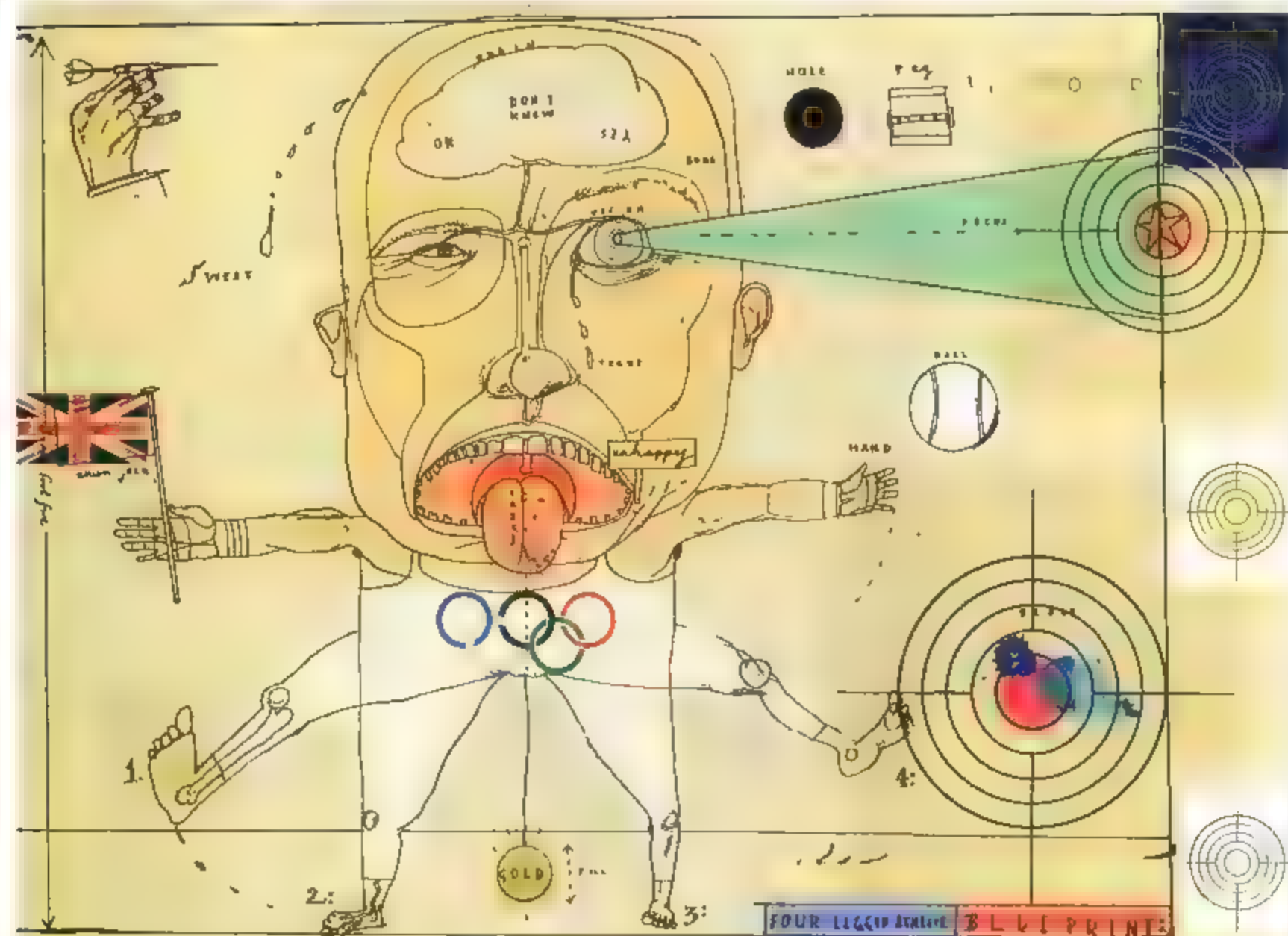
INGENIEUR
AUTOMATIC



DA VINCI
AUTOMATIC



PORTOFINO
HAND-WOUND



You'd Make a Good President

OR MAYBE A GOOD FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER. OR A GOOD SHORTSTOP. THE POINT IS, YOU HAVE NO IDEA.

Last February, I stumbled across a short news story that—at first glance—seemed only mildly entertaining and mostly innocuous. It was only interesting because it was weird. But I can't stop thinking about this particular article. These are the opening paragraphs, as they appeared online:

LONDON (AP)—Answering a nationwide appeal for tall people with athletic potential, more than 50 prospective Olympic athletes have been placed in British training programs for the 2012 London Games.

More than 3,800 people applied to be part of the "Sporting Giants" project. They were tested for their skills in four Olympic sports—rowing, handball, beach volleyball and indoor volleyball.

Making the cut were 34 rowers, 11 handball players and seven volleyball players. They have been integrated into various British Olympic training squads.

"There are so many people out there who don't know how good they could be at

sports they've probably not even thought about," UK Sport talent identification manager Chelsea Warr said Thursday. "This was a mild shake of the tree. We looked under a few rocks and look what we found."

I find this information fascinating, and not just because I'm the coauthor of an upcoming 677-page book tentatively titled *Future Legends of British Handball*. What intrigues me is the brilliantly simplistic premise of the British experiment—it eradicated the role of self selection from the process of achievement. Now, I realize that sentiment sounds borderline draconian. But the technique might be rewarding in a lot of contexts that have nothing to do with skeletal frames or volleyball. The Sporting Giants project operated on the belief that the average tall person in London might not realize he was perfectly designed to excel at an activity he'd never even considered. It seems possible

PROXIMITY.
NEW SUBTLE
FRAGRANCES
FROM AXE >>



that this same logic could apply to most human endeavors. Because most people don't know what they're good at.

Imagine you are Tom Cruise in *All the Right Moves*.

Imagine that your fictional high school experience is almost over. You have just been thrown off the football team for criticizing Craig T. Nelson's skepticism of Scientology, and your life will now take one of two paths: Either you will a) take a job at the local steel mill and remain trapped in your depressing Pennsylvania town, or b) earn a scholarship and pursue your adolescent love of mechanical engineering. In the first case, you have no agency over the decision that will define your existence. In the second situation, you get to pick how you will try to make a living—even though you really have no idea how good an engineer you will be or how much you will enjoy the actual work. In the former scenario, your life follows the path of least resistance; in the latter scenario, you'll invest years of energy and thought toward a vocation you wanted at the age of seventeen but might despise when you're thirty-seven. Either way, you'll inadvertently ignore all the other careers that might suit your skill set far better (Navy pilot, Nascar driver, annoying Kokomo bartender, bisexual vampire, etc.).

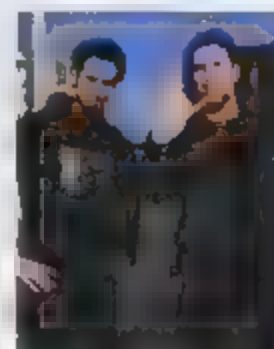
Look at it like this: There are many traits necessary for someone to be a physician, and understanding medicine is chief among them. But being a good doctor requires countless other things that are difficult to imagine or test for—the way a person interacts with unusually nervous patients, the capacity to diagnose unconventional problems, ethical boundaries, etc. These details are essential but only tangible in practice. As a result, medical schools are forced to choose candidates based on academic achievement (school grades and MCAT scores) and how effectively an applicant expresses the desire to be a doctor. But what if the applicants don't understand their own desires? What if the *understanding* of medicine is only marginally related to the *application* of medicine? We rely on future doctors to select themselves; we assume the kind of person who would be good at medicine will naturally gravitate toward that craft, and that the type of twenty-one-year-old who's sharp enough to get into (and complete) medical school will be able to adopt all the other skills needed for the job. This is how most life paths are patterned, medical and otherwise: We assume people (somehow) understand who they are and what they can do.¹ It seems like there must be a better way.

I am not suggesting that anyone should be forced to accept a life just because they're theoretically built for it, nor am I discounting the role that aspiration plays in someone's success. But I do wonder if our reliance on self-selection drastically limits the parameters of human potential (and human happiness). It has been my experience that people are not good at understanding themselves; they tend to over- or underestimate their intelligence, they consistently behave in ways that contradict their espoused wishes, and when asked directly, they conflate their defining personality traits with how those traits are perceived by others (optimistic vs. pessimistic; ex-

¹ This is most readily apparent with high-profile public occupations—NBA general managers, FEMA administrators, the U.S. presidency, and virtually anyone who works in human resources.

NEW MUSIC FROM IRAQ

If there was ever a country where metal music was designed to flourish, it would be Iraq, a place where actual metal regularly falls from the sky. This, however, is not the case. The documentary film *Heavy Metal in Baghdad* (on DVD this month) deftly illustrates the semihopeless plight of a Metallica-influenced Iraqi band called Acrasicauda—the name comes from the Latin for “black scorpion”—a group that tries to find hard-rock satisfaction in a city where it's supposedly illegal to bang one's own head (lest you be mistaken for praying like a Jew). Shot by the Canadians from *Vice* magazine on location in Iraq and Syria, *Heavy Metal in Baghdad* presents one of the clearest representations of day-to-day existence in an urban war zone. Though the filmmakers seem a little too fixated on reminding the audience how dangerous and subversive it was to make this movie, their final product is better than virtually all mainstream media coverage of cultural life in Iraq. The band members are honest and sympathetic, and the footage of the city is both stunning and horrifying. The music itself isn't very good, but that barely matters—this film is heavy, but it's not really about metal. —C. K.



troverted vs. introverted, etc.). This is no one's fault or failing; it's simply impossible to be objective or insightful about the person you have always been. And since this is the case, it shouldn't be surprising that a) so many people are unhappy with what they have chosen to do for a living, and b) so many people aren't particularly good at the functions they've devoted their lives to. Moreover, those two issues are almost certainly interrelated. Try to think of the ten happiest people you know. How many of those ten are good at what they do for a living? People select careers that seem interesting or lucrative, but they only enjoy jobs for which they have an aptitude. If there were a way to fit people into jobs they're naturally, unconsciously good at—as opposed to jobs they *think* they'd want to have—everyone might be better off.

So how could this be done? How does one place people in lives they've never even considered? The British Sporting Giants model might not be far off. It was so rudimentary that it almost seems absurd. They just examined a few sports and concluded that the single unifying element that most often led to success was physical frame. Rowing is a sport that requires myriad skills, and it's a sport that short people can sometimes succeed at, but on average, it is a huge advantage to have long arms. It's purely mathematical. And this is something most people don't consider. Most long-armed people do not sit around thinking, You know, I bet I could totally row the shit out of a narrow watercraft. No nonrower ever thinks like this. But place that long-armed man in a boat and he realizes what he was made to do. So, what if we changed the way we hired people? What if instead of having people attempt to select and pursue careers, employers advertised for blind characteristics? What if they analyzed the nature of specialized jobs, figured out which qualities were most central to success, and then recruited people who possessed those specific abilities (regardless of who they were, what they'd done before, or what they thought they were supposed to do for a living)?

Now, I realize they would sometimes be wrong. In fact, they might be wrong most of the time.

But would they be any less right than you? ■



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10

Things YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN

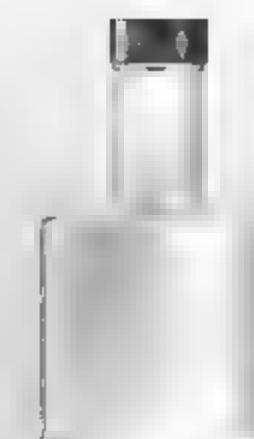


By Kim Cattrall

1. We're not interested in A's things. A's things: A vibrator, A vibrator.
2. We tell our phrase to so here's no criticism multiple orgasms.
3. We want you to be sure to your selves And kiss And not excessively in the middle.
4. No man should ever purchase anything called Enware. If you're going bald, then go bald and try to be proud.
5. The secret to getting out of trouble with your friends is being sorry. A sorry man can be forgiven for anything. Exceptions: cheating and combovers.
6. We don't mind getting sex unless they're awkward with the movies. Starting from the top of twenty-would and men.
7. The vagina is a birth canal. The vulva is a quiet time.
8. The only way to pull off twelve different kinds of breakfast cereal is very careful.
9. I might seem strange, but every now and then check on your backside to be sure you don't like what you see. Check it out. We're the same.
10. The woman if he would wait you down what he is doing and then from where you think it is.

Kim Cattrall stars as Janina Jones in *Sex and the City* in theaters May 16.

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75
Page

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OF STORIED
HISTORY—IN ONE EASY PAGE
THIS MONTH

1968

Marked by two assassinations and an escalation in Vietnam, 1968 was a brutal and historic year. We just did our best to sort it all out.

JUNE 5: ROBERT F. KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

Surely the most perfect comment on the whole episode was a small news paper paragraph giving our Top Ten television programs for that week according to TAM ratings. This showed that *The Saint* and the assassination of Robert Kennedy tied for ninth place.

"The Elevation of Senator Robert F. Kennedy," by Malcolm Muggeridge, November

Esquire



The Power of Bluff

APRIL'S COVER: MUHAMMAD ALI AS SAINT SEBASTIAN

[Ali had been stripped of his title in 1967 for refusing, on grounds of his Muslim faith, to serve in Vietnam. Unable to fight professionally, he was living off his dwindling savings in a modest house in Chicago.] "Just give me a pair of blue jeans and a leather jacket, give me a stick with a rag on the back with some food in it and say, 'Get on the railroad tracks, and I will do it. I believe that Allah would lead me to a gold mine on the train. I might find a million-dollar bill.'"

Muhammad Ali, as quoted in "The Passion of Muhammad Ali," by Leonard Shecter, April

APRIL 4: MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ASSASSINATION



He never lost his "soul." He was never ashamed. His career said many things. That the South cannot be counted out of the struggle yet. That the Negro does not have to go elsewhere to find an identity—he can make his stand on American soil. That even the Baptist preacher's God need not yield, yet, to Allah. God is not dead—though "De Lawd" has died. One of His prophets died.

"Martin Luther King Is Still on the Case!" by Garry Wills, August

FEBRUARY 2–NOVEMBER 9: NIXON CAMPAIGN



There is a genius of deflation that follows Nixon about, robbing him, at each crucial moment, of any air of heroism. He has been strong many times; but fate gets photographers to him when he collapses on Bill Knowland's shoulder in tears, or when he snarls at journalists. It is said that he cannot win; that this reputation is a self-fulfilling prophecy. But his real trouble is that he cannot lose—cannot look great in defeat (like Stevenson), bow out gracefully, leave well enough alone, disappear.

"What Makes the Newest Nixon Run?" by Garry Wills, May

VIETNAM ESCALATES



Steve Canyon, U.S. Air Force, gives his take on Vietnam in a strip drawn for Esquire by creator Milton Caniff

JANUARY 31–FEBRUARY 25: TET OFFENSIVE

"Sometimes," the General says, "I think I'm the only man in the world who understands this thing."

"It must be very lonely for you."

"Mike, it comes with the job. But you. If you hate all this so much, why do you stay?"

He has me there. I wait a moment before answering. "Because, General, it's the only war we've got."

And he really smiles now. After all that talk, we're speaking the same language again.

"Hell Sucks," by Michael Herr, August

ACTIVISM TURNS MILITANT



Participants in the Poor People's Campaign, from Harvey Dinnerstein's "The Face of Protest/1968."

AUGUST 26–29 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

Reportedly they are now radicalized. Ten, fifteen, twenty years, the theory is, and these boys and girls will be out carrying rifles in America's own Sierra Maestras. Maybe. Let us hope so, anyhow. But the Chicago that has radicalized many has reactionalized twice as many, and these people are mighty not only in numbers but in nightsticks, pistols, CS, armored vehicles, atomic bombs, and, as Chicago teaches, in their readiness to use them—and these people in November vote.

"In a Pig's Eye," by John Sack, November



One of the five old plane wrecks that was rediscovered during the search for Steve Fossett.

What I Learned Looking for Steve Fossett

HE SET OUT TO FIND THE LOST AVIATOR. HE DIDN'T—NO ONE HAS. BUT AS HE RETRACED FOSSETT'S LAST MOVES, HE LEARNED A FEW THINGS ABOUT THE VAST NEVADA DESERT, LIKE...

BY LUKE DITTRICH

IT'S NOT A DESERT.

The area Fossett probably went down in is a jumble of scrubland and forest and canyons and black-water lakes. It would have been hard to find him in that sort of terrain even if the searchers knew exactly where to look. I experienced the landscape's talent for concealment firsthand one afternoon, high up in the Sierra Nevada.

A Civil Air Patrol pilot had given me the GPS coordinates of an uncharted crash site that he had spotted during the search for Fossett. (Six wrecks had been "discovered" during the search, but the other five all turned out to have been previously documented.) I wanted to visit the site and see if I could find a serial number or something else that might help me identify the wreckage.

The coordinates were near the top of a seven-thousand-foot-high ridgeline, five trailless miles from the nearest road. It was a long hike, and when I arrived, all I saw were boulders and rabbit burrows and trees. I zigzagged the ridgeline for three hours, figuring that even if the coordinates were slightly off—the pilot had taken them while more than a thousand feet above the deck—I'd have to spot something eventually. I didn't. The problem is, when you're on the ground, your perspective is ridiculously limited and your eyes, overanxious, start registering way too many false pos-

sitives: I can't tell you how many mangled ailerons turned out to be gnarled juniper branches. The pilot himself had attributed his find to pure luck: He'd been flying by at precisely the right time of day for the sun to reflect visibly off a scrap of aluminum. I walked down from the mountains that evening humbled. I knew where to look—I had GPS coordinates!—and I still found nothing at all.

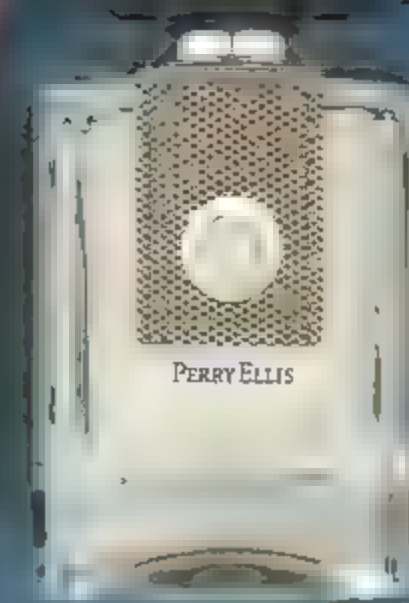
PLANE WRECKS ARE BRUTAL TIME CAPSULES.

A few days before that failed trek, I made a successful visit to a different crash site, one that was four decades old but had been rediscovered during the Fossett search. I wanted to see it because I wanted to know what plane wreckage looked like up close. I figured knowing that might help me tell this story. This site was more accessible, just a little more than an hour's hike from the nearest road. I went with my sister, who had flown out to visit me in Reno. We arrived at the fuselage first, but the wreckage spread more than a quarter of a mile. This gave us a sort of reverse-sequence perspective on the catastrophe as we worked our way up the mountainside, through the

Fossett was declared dead in February, five months after he disappeared.



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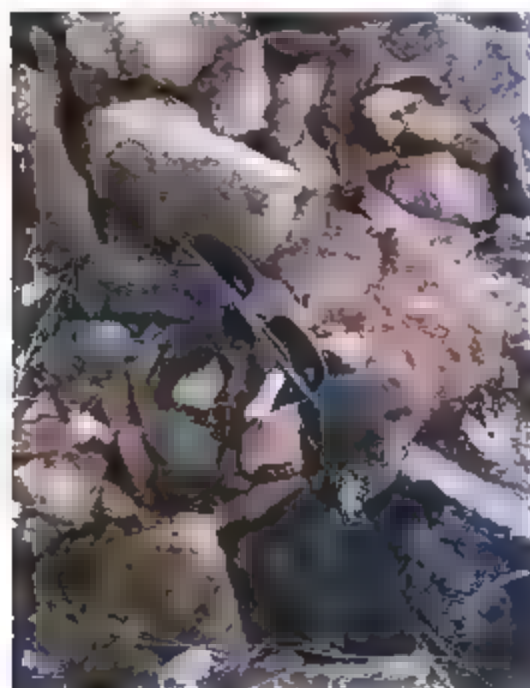


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The "impact lenses" were intact. The plane nearby was a crumpled wad of aluminum.

scraps of metal and fabric and plastic that documented the plane's piecemeal obliteration. As we explored, we found things. A leather shoe. A bleached bone that looked like a human femur. A pair of Foster Grant aviator sunglasses. (The glasses featured 1960's ff77 "impact lenses," which, true to their name, survived the crash uncracked.) Plane wrecks are not like car wrecks, which are swept off the roads immediately. Plane wrecks stay put.

MY SISTER SEES BEAUTY WHERE I DON'T.

The fuselage, which included the cockpit, made me shudder. I've flown in a lot of small planes, and this crumpled wad of aluminum was a testament to the forces unleashed when a small plane meets the side of a mountain. My sister, a painter, was taking photos of the cockpit from all angles. I asked her why. "It's gorgeous," she said.

RAWLEY BIGSBY IS MORE POWERFUL THAN THE INTERNET.

During the search for Steve Fossett, a number of different story lines flared up, burned brightly in the press for a few days or weeks, and then fizzled out. The one that lasted longest, and attracted the most attention, was the one about the legions of anonymous Web surfers whose eyeballs had been recruited to help out in the search, and who would, with the aid of all the fresh satellite imagery generously provided to them by Google Earth, surely find Fossett's downed plane. This story line—

crowd sourcing meets search and rescue—did not stand up to scrutiny. As it turned out, the Internet searchers failed to contribute any significant information. On the contrary, they muddled the waters by spotting hundreds of bogus crash sites in the fuzzy satellite photos, leading to countless wasted hours for the people on the official search teams.

In fact, despite the newspapers' trumpeting of the Google Earth angle, the most promising lead to emerge during the entire search came as a result of old-school skip tracing.

On September 3, 2007, at about eight-thirty in the morning, Steve Fossett borrowed a blue-and-white Bellanca Super Decathlon from Barron Hilton, Paris's grandfather, and taxied onto a runway at Hilton's million-acre Flying M Ranch. Just before Fossett took off, Hilton's staff pilot, a guy named Mike Gilles, carefully went over the preflight and landing procedures with him. As Gilles explained later, Steve Fossett was "not a stick-and-rudder man" and "could get in over his head" in this type of aircraft. Although Gilles was the last person to speak to Steve Fossett that morning, he was not the last person to see Steve Fossett's plane. That would be Rawley Bigsby.

Rawley Bigsby is a ranch hand at the Flying M. At around eleven, just before embarking on a multiday road trip, he spotted the Bellanca overhead. He had also seen the plane a few hours earlier and had mentioned that sighting to another ranch worker in passing. The search for Fossett didn't get under way until noon, and by the time word filtered back to the search team that Rawley might have valuable information, he was long gone. Over the next few days, the hunt for Rawley Bigsby became a sort of search within a search: He was tracked—with the aid of his girlfriend—first to Texas and then to Oregon. Finally, local sheriff's deputies caught up with him at a rodeo in Pendleton.

Here, taken from the notes of his debriefing, is what Rawley saw:

"Rawley stated the plane was flying very low (approx 60-80' off deck) as if he was looking for a place to land and flying at slow speed. Rawley said it looked like the pilot was playing around, because the plane was rocking slightly from side to side and the tail was pitching up and down. Rawley watched as the plane continued east at same speed and altitude and appeared to be following the road (NFD 026 road) and lost sight of the plane as it flew over the Mud Springs area."

That information—the final sighting of Steve Fossett—is the result of a decidedly low-tech manhunt, but it remains to this day the best clue anyone has to Fossett's whereabouts.

NEVADA WON.

Of course, even Rawley's lead, the best of a meager bunch, wasn't enough. Ultimately, boot leather proved as ineffective as crowd sourcing in the search for Steve Fossett. The final story line, the one that remained after all the others fizzled out, was this: A wild state swallowed a big man and refused to give him up.

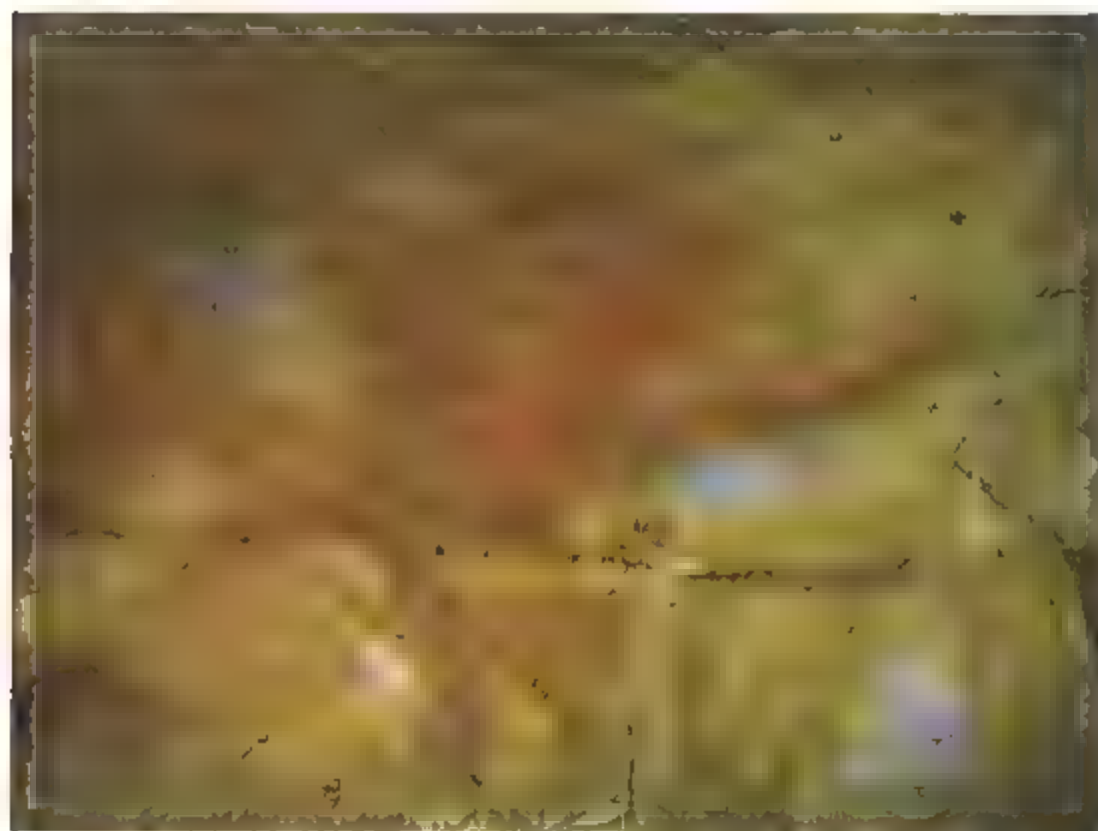
BLUE IS NOT ALWAYS THE BLUE.

After the initial on- and off-line efforts to find her husband had failed, Peggy Fossett hired a team composed of people from two companies, one called Fireball Information Technologies and the other called High Altitude Mapping Missions, to try a different approach. In late October, the team began using a camera-equipped jet to photograph the entire search area from above, eventually accumulating ten terabytes worth of imagery, all of it much higher resolution than what satellites can provide. The photographs covered an area as large as Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined and were sharp enough to make objects as small as this magazine distinguishable.

One morning more than a month after the last photographs had been taken, Peggy sent Mark Marshall, Steve Fossett's staff pilot, to Fireball's offices to get a progress report. I accompanied him.

John Arvesen, the former head of NASA's U-2 program, did most of the talking. The team's major obstacle, he explained, had to do with the color blue. The blue paint that covered much of its wings and fuselage was the most distinguishing thing about the airplane Steve Fossett had disappeared in, so Fireball had written a computer program that was scanning through the immense database of imagery, flagging any photographs that contained a similar hue. What Arvesen and the others soon discovered was that blue is everywhere.





A partial map of the search area for Fossett, which encompassed 25,000 square miles. The red lines are flight paths of some of the search aircraft, which flew more than 1,000 sorties in four weeks.

"The Sierras were a big problem," he explained. "There's a lot of snow in the crevices. And when they're illuminated by skylight, they're blue. ..." He points at a blueish spot on a printout of one of the photographs. "This kind of looks blue. It's a lone piece of snow, I think. I'm almost positive that's snow."

He moved to a large computer monitor that displayed another photograph the program had flagged.

"So blue, the definition of blue, is kind of interesting," he continued. "It's difficult, because sometimes in the shadows things will look more blue than they do in the sunlight. Pieces of snow look blue. Tarps. Camping equipment. We have spent a lot of time really defining what is the blue. Trying to separate it from ..." He leaned over the workstation, clicked the mouse a few times. The image on the screen zoomed all the way in to what the program had noticed, a pale-blue handicapped symbol painted on an empty space in an asphalt parking lot.

THE WORLD'S FASTEST CAR WILL BE DRIVEN BY A WOMAN.

The fastest car in the world is basically a jet engine yanked out of a Vietnam-era fighter jet and welded to a cockpit on wheels. Steve Fossett was planning to drive it eight hundred miles per hour sometime this year, which would have bested the existing land-speed record by a good margin. When I saw it, a couple of months after Fossett's disappearance, the car was sitting in a Reno warehouse, looking dangerous and leaking fuel. Though the team that Fossett had hired to facilitate his record attempt was still laboring over the vehicle—prepping it, getting it ready—it had no replacement driver and was running on financial fumes. It wasn't clear how long Peggy Fossett would continue funding it. Team leader Eric Ahlstrom, an engineer who used to work on one of the Star Wars programs for Boeing, avoided speculating about the project's future and instead talked to me about the surprising ways in which his old and new lines of work overlapped. For example, the "ultra-high-speed supersonic-capable parachutes" that would be deployed to slow the car down had once been attached to nuclear bombs.

A car that can move very fast in a straight line is both impressive and useless. There is no prize money to be won for building the fastest car in the world, no motivation other than the record, which is why it often takes someone like Steve Fossett, a rich man who valued records more than money, to spur efforts like this one into motion.

A few weeks after I saw the car, I learned that Eric Ahlstrom and his team had decided

to consider a woman to replace Fossett as the driver. They hoped the resulting novelty factor might make the project more attractive to potential sponsors.

BALLOONS ARE EVERYWHERE.

Steve Fossett's autobiography is called *Chasing the Wind*, and on the back cover there's a photograph of a silver balloon. It is several stories high and cost more than \$1 million to build and fly. In 2002, it carried Fossett around the world, earning him one of his 115 world records. By his own admission Fossett was obsessed with, perhaps addicted to, setting records, and he spent a lot of his money and most of his time doing so. A combination of innate physical endurance and funds ample enough to purchase the very best technology allowed him to achieve numerous firsts. He was the first person to fly a balloon solo around the world. He was the first person to fly an airplane solo nonstop around the world. He was the first person to sail around the world in less than sixty days. A year before he disappeared, he made the first stratospheric glider flight.

He always wanted to be first.

I did, too—with Fossett's story. But I wasn't. An early piece, by *National Geographic Adventure* writer James Vlahos, came out while I was still in Nevada. It contained a tidbit that was, to me, resonant. Vlahos described walking near a ridge-line, looking for Fossett, when he spotted a flash of something metallic that he thought might be a piece of airplane. It turned out to be a silver birthday balloon.

The same thing had happened to me. Twice. Once during each of my wreck hikes. Both balloons had been in remote areas, and the second was the only man-made object I'd come across in eight hours.

I did a little research.

Turns out toy balloons are amazingly intrepid and can travel long distances. How long? A story ran in a British newspaper last year about some kids who'd attached notes with return addresses to a bunch of balloons and released them from a school in Manchester. One of the kids got a letter back from China.

I imagine you can find old balloons in even the remotest parts of the world. They fly high, go wherever the wind takes them, and eventually fall to earth. There are plenty in the wilds of Nevada.

Most will never be found. ■

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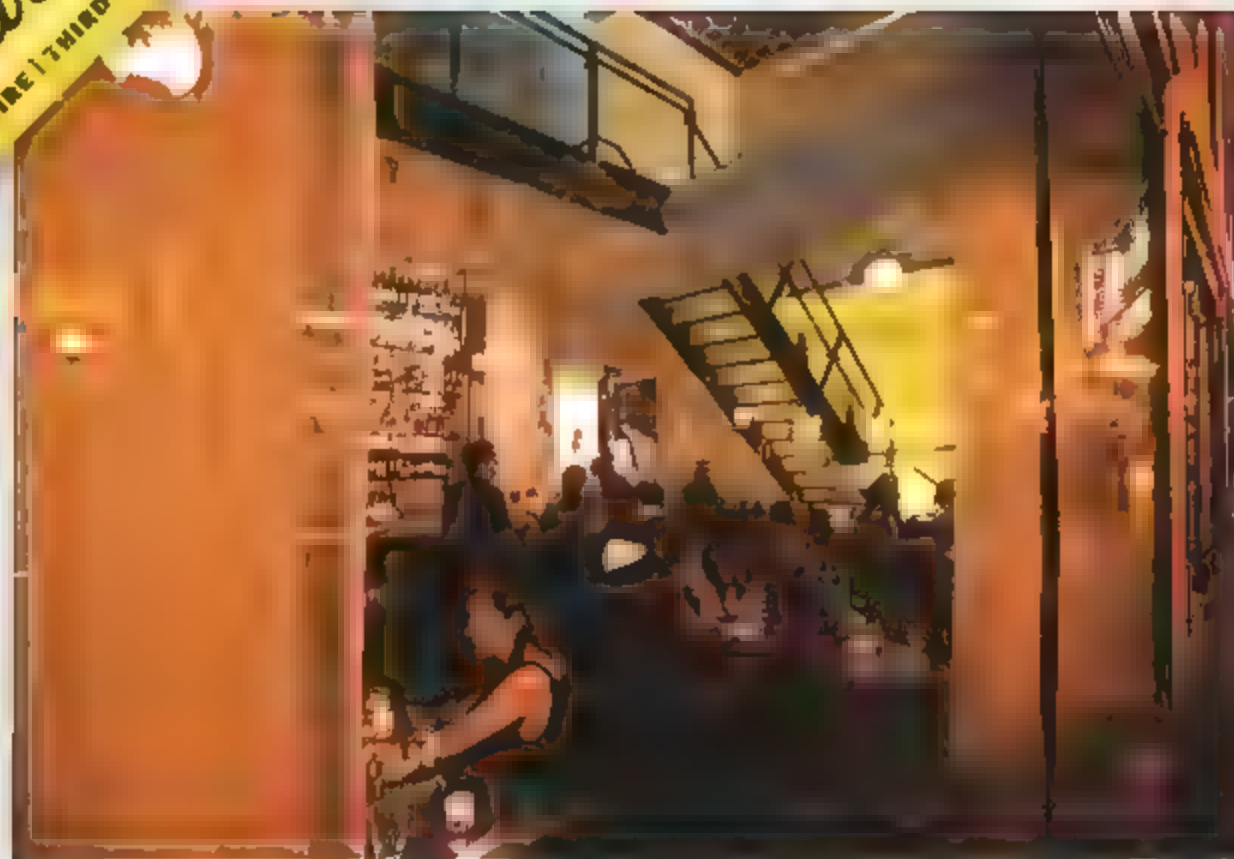
2008

Another year. Another round. Beer bars, cocktail joints, pubs with great food. Exceptional, harmonious, glorious places to drink. As always, to add to the growing list, we asked a lot of friends, the most esteemed of whom is David Wondrich, Esquire's drinks correspondent. The list starts in the West. Then it meanders east. Circuitously. Like Manifest Destiny, but drunk and backward. Now on with it already. We're thirsty.

(See the full list of America's Best Bars at esquire.com/bestbars.)

Photograph by Dwight Eschliman

With Whom We'd Drink



Vessel SEATTLE *You're having:* The Vessel 75

This is the kind of sleek, elegant, and utterly unsentimental space in which you expect to find everyone drinking vodka-and-tonics. Nope. For once, the cocktails are as modern as the design, a benchmark twenty-first-century mix of tweaked, often molecularized (don't ask) classics and clever new creations. Style never tasted so good (1312 Fifth Avenue, 206-652-5222) DAVID WONDRIKH

Alaskan Hotel & Bar JUNEAU, ALASKA

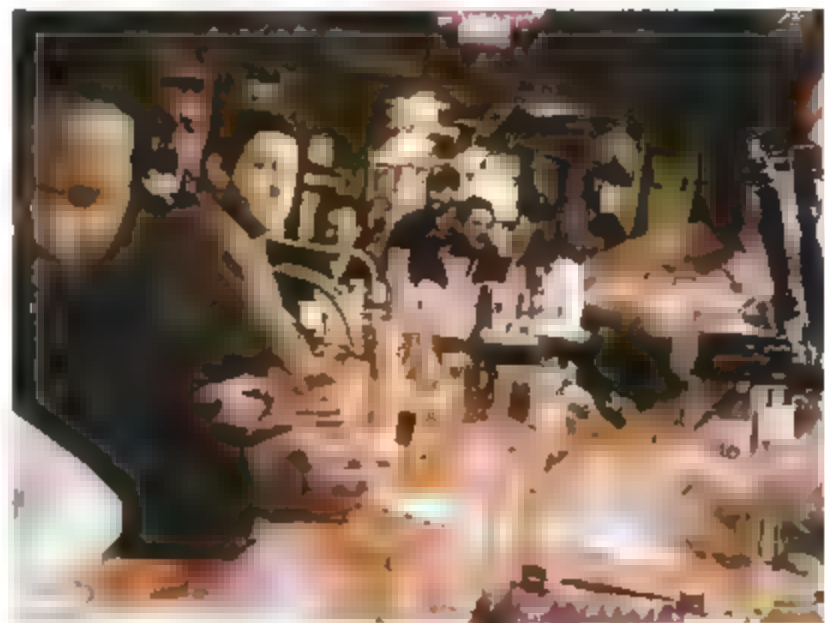
You're having: An Alaskan Amber (brewed in Juneau)

Juneau is our toughest state capital to get a handle on. It's not the nation's only mix of eclectic populations, but nowhere else do hardscrab-

ble fishermen, millionaire oil lobbyists, Tlingit Indians, hippies, hipsters, hard core boozers, and roughly a million cruise-ship passengers a year crowd into a downtown core that can be walked in fifteen minutes. As one of the state's top tourist destinations, much

of the historic town has become a manufactured version of Last Frontier mythology, but one haunt that's remained an unadulterated touchstone of northern strength guzzling is the Alaskan Hotel & Bar. Built in 1913, the bar retains its late-Victorian flourishes—wood floor, funky alcoves, high ceiling, stained glass, gaudy furniture in a balcony overlooking a main room where deep-woods flannel mingles comfortably with lawyer-wear and matching Orca Deck out fits. The small stage is the heart of a music scene filled with talent more impressive than you'd expect in a town of thirty thousand. (167 South Franklin Street; 907-586-1000)

—CHUCK THOMPSON



Geoduck Tavern

BRINNON, WASHINGTON

You're having: The Burger Dip and a Rainier

The Geoduck Tavern has its own salmon derby. That's one reason this antlered, clubhouse-style hangout with a deck overlooking piney Hood Canal is a rustic paradise. The other is the Burger Dip. (Owner Sue Perley: "I saw this big logger come in one day, and I said, 'I'll bet he'd like to dip that burger in something.'") It's a hybrid hamburger and French Dip sandwich, invented here in tiny Brinnon, Washington, a way station for Olympic Mountains hikers in summer, a rainy Twin Peaks stand-in the rest of the year (307103 U.S. Highway 101; 360-796-4430)

—C.T.

The recipe: One pound of hamburger made into two patties, Swiss cheese, grilled onions, "jus" (Perley makes her jus from roast-beef drippings; you can buy bouillon or use the dregs from any cooked beef), and a sourdough roll. She won't share the secret of her sourdough roll, but she makes a full loaf, slices it into thirds, then cuts each section horizontally for the bun.

Clyde Common

PORTLAND, OREGON

You're having: A November cocktail

Hotel bars are sad places. The anodyne, Cheers-like decor, the conversation-crushing TVs, the grudging service, the uninspired drinks, make you wish you'd taken the red-eye. Clyde Common—in the Ace Hotel in the middle of downtown Portland—breaks the mold. First of all, there are no TVs. And the bartenders are young and anything but burned out. The drinks?



How to Drink Alone

By Tom Chiarella

DON'T USE it as a warm-up. It's a prelude to nothing. Drinking alone must be an event unto itself. It's never about getting sloppy, or lucky, or even happy. Beginning and end, make it a choice. A gift, not an escape. It's about raising your awareness, not dulling it. Be neat, small of affect, businesslike.

START in the afternoon.

2:30 is universally a good time, since the bar will be empty, the bartender busy stocking the coolers, wiping down bottles.

FORGET BAR CHATTER, since it's about drifting, forgetting, passing time without noticing. Instead, quietly pay attention.

DRINK LIQUOR—whiskey.

GET A BEER BACK, if you must. Gin is acceptable, too, but don't put anything sweet in it.

IGNORE the television.

LISTEN A LITTLE. Enjoy the muffled aural measures of a bar waking up. Watch the door or the window instead. Draw connections to the world outside, even as it recedes slightly from perception. Notice the angles of light, the pulse of the traffic, even the evolution of customers who drift in as the day twists down to its nub.

READ A PAPER, sure. A book is good, too. Crack the spine and lay it flat on the bar. Read, don't pretend to read.

DON'T EAT. Drinking alone is not about buffalo wings.

LOOK UP often.

JUKEBOXES are an acceptable diversion, though don't ever select Cat Stevens when drinking alone.

IF A FRIEND happens in, do not demur. Instead, take it as an irrefutable signal that the meditative event of drinking alone is over. You aren't alone anymore. Buy him a drink and, after a reasonable juncture, leave. Give him what you came in for. A little solitude, with liquor. There's no shame in it.

Let's just say that Portland has several great cocktail bars (try the Teardrop Lounge), but the majority of the people—interesting-looking, lively people—sipping cocktails here can't charge them to their room. Plus, the food's good. (1014 Southwest Stark Street, 503-228-3333)

—DAVID WONDRIKH

Jimmy Mak's

PORTLAND, OREGON

You're having: Maybe the Razatini. But probably not.

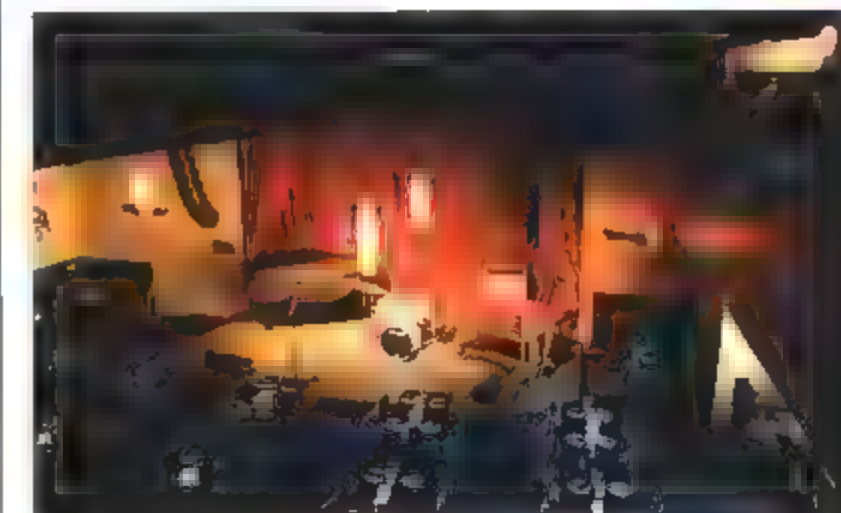
An elegant, two-tiered show room with lacquered wood tables, crisp acoustics, and red-velvet curtains that part for jazz acts, Jimmy Mak's is a dream venue for performers and audiences. All of which makes it a distant call from the bar's previous incarnation as a gritty, dimly lit space reeking of cigarettes and spilled beer.

Jimmy's home, the Pearl District, was until recently a low-rent warehouse zone where struggling musicians and artists could afford to

set up shop. Recent years have seen "the Pearl" transformed. Tenants have been chased out to make room for boutiques, \$30-entrée restaurants, and million-dollar condos. Deciding it was better to switch than fight, Jimmy's kicked off its small-town shoes and bolted across the street for renovated digs in 2006.

In normal times, in normal places, economic prosperity heralded by glitzy jazz clubs wouldn't be cause for aggravation. But the town dubbed "Little Beirut" by Bush I staffers is feeling so besieged just now by the media-fueled invasion of out-of-towners that newspapers have taken to running a series of hostile exchanges between natives and transplants.

Jimmy Mak's is an undeniable palace of jazz excellence and retro style. Whether it qualifies as hip depends on whether you believe that once *Newsweek* thinks you're cool, the gig is already up. (221 Northwest Tenth Avenue, 503-295-6542) C.T.



GREAT MOMENTS IN BARTENDING

Wollensky Grill, New York City: Packed bar, as always. Packed with men. Patrick, a beautifully intolerant man, stands in front of a new arrival. Guy orders white wine. Patrick says nothing. Patrick sides the wine in front of him, then bides his time until the guy has consumed most of the glass. Patrick stands in front of him again. Loudly enough for everyone in the bar to hear, Patrick says, "Another char donnay. A ice?"

—DAVID GRANGER



THE ENDORSEMENT

The Smoky Bar (by a Nonsmoker)

By Chuck Thompson

I DON'T SMOKE. Never have. Never will. I believe everything I've ever heard about the dangers of cigarettes. But bars are supposed to be subversive. Uninhibited, noisy, smoky. This was the atmosphere that put you in such a panic to grow up. Once you did, you appreciated the bar

even more as one of the few places where the freedom to be an adult—in your behavior, contemptible opinions, hookups, vices—was never seriously curtailed.

Yeah, it's nice to come home with clothes that don't smell like an ash-tray, but I miss the grime. I miss our history

together. This country was founded on the tobacco trade; our Revolution was planned between swigs and puffs in musty places like Boston's Green Dragon Tavern; Bogie wouldn't have been Bogie without the coffin nails (to say nothing of Keith Richards); and Joe's Corner Tap isn't as fun

when half the working-class regulars—the real target of this antismoking jihad—have to bail out midargument to huddle in the rain just to get in a relaxing huff. By kowtowing to yet another milepost on the road to American pussification, we might be saving our lungs, but we're killing our seditious hearts.

times you'll see people running away from something, people checking every parked car for an unlocked door, or hookers walking the drag or freshening up their makeup.

In the corner of the bar is a television set, but I hardly ever pay any attention to it. (98 Turk Street, 415 771 9655)

COLBY BLIZZELL

Tasca Cafe

SAN FRANCISCO

You're having: Anything but the house cocktail (brandy and hot chocolate—pass)

Beauty isn't everything, it's true. But it's still worth plenty in this world, and this is one pretty damn beautiful old bar. Looking like its fixtures were bought from whoever supplied the joint pictured in Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*, Tosca's is a monument to chrome and red leatherette and burnished wood. (242 Columbus Avenue; 415-986-9651)

DAVID WONDRICH

Toronado

SAN FRANCISCO

You're having: A pint of the Pliny the Elder

Most bars that offer a serious selection of microbrews and imports on tap pull in a crowd that tends toward freshly laundered jeans. That's not the Toronado's style at all. This Lower Haight fixture is more of—okay, it's a pit. The only attempt at decor is the profusion of retired tap handles festooning the walls and the highly covetable TORONADO BY OLDSMOBILE sign in the back. The beers and ales, however, are hardcore, as are the bartenders, the customers, and the sausage-

es you can bring in from the joint next door. (547 Haight Street, 415-863-2276)

DAVID WONDRICH

The Mermaid

LOS ANGELES

You're having: Nothing sweet or blended

Quentin "Boots" Thelen opened this beachside place in 1954 as a gathering spot for World War II vets, and its leather booths and fireplace alcove have remained unchanged among the tourist traps at the base of L. A.'s Hermosa Beach pier. Boots died last year, so his stepdaughter, Diana, now enforces the cash-only and no-swearing policies, and the septuagenarian bartenders still refuse to make drinks they don't like. Their taste—and the Regal Beagle decor—justifies the attitude. (11 Pier Avenue, Hermosa Beach, 310-374-9344)

MATTHEW BELLONI

Lakewood Landing

DALLAS

You're having: Shiner Bock and the wings. The hot ones—not the really hot ones.

The sign outside says, AN UPGRADE DIVE. No one would argue. A couple of booths are tattered,

the stained carpet's faded, the pool table's felt is worn down, and some of the faces in the mirror behind the bar have seen better days. Those days were likely spent at the Landing, a rare stand-alone joint in East Dallas where the gray-hairs make room for the goatees. The place breathes history but with a hacker's cough. It's dark and smoky, even when it's light out and no one's lit up. If the wood paneling could talk, it would say what everyone's thinking: Do not change a thing. (5818 Live Oak Street; 214-823-2410)

—ADAM MCGILL

Deep Eddy Cabaret

AUSTIN

You're having: Lone Star by the six-dollar pitcher

At the last South by Southwest Festival, the racket was damn near seizure inducing. Bands were set up in the Torchy's Tacos lot. At the entrance to Whole Foods. Everywhere. Then, come Saturday, when we were flat-ass tired of being rocked, a longtime Austinite steered me to the Deep Eddy, a converted grocery store and bait shop on the west side of downtown where the laughter is louder than the jukebox. The appeal here

GREAT MOMENTS IN BARTENDING

A dive, somewhere between Denver and Steamboat, dead on a Thursday afternoon. A band is in the back doing a sound check. I order a White Russian. The bartender sniffs the milk carton and makes a face. says, "Hang on." He jogs out of the bar. After seven, maybe eight minutes, he returns with a half gallon of vitamin D whole milk. "There's a store across the street." I thank him sincerely. "No trouble," he says. "It's six dollars." I give him twenty. —RYAN D'AGOSTINO



is simple, and it's held for a half century: You drink, you smoke, you talk. Without earplugs. (2315 Lake Austin Boulevard; 512 472 0961)

—JOE OESTREICH

Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop

NEW ORLEANS

You're having: A Sazerac

Sitting in the ancient, candlelit gloom of Lafitte's with a Sazerac in front of you, it's entirely possible to believe that somehow the calendar has

come unstuck and New Orleans is still the terminus of the Natchez Trace; that the streets are thronged with rawboned raftsmen and dark-eyed Creoles with lace cuffs; that you're a gentleman adventurer and the girl sharing the little pool of light with you is a runaway heiress. New Orleans has many a funky bar, a rowdy bar, a homey bar, a scary bar, a sporty bar. It doesn't have a lot of romantic bars, though. This is one. (941 Bourbon Street, 504-593-9761)

DAVID WONDRICH

Cantina

SAN FRANCISCO

You're having: A duende cocktail

San Francisco is sprouting a ton of new, interesting cocktail bars. Alembic, Elixir, and Rye—to name just three—are all doing very serious cocktails. Now, having this many good choices is like having no choice at all, and when you've got no choice, you punt. So because Cantina not only makes excellent drinks but, unlike the others, is also within easy football-kicking range of most downtown hotels, it gets our nod. Oh, and for the antique bottle of Pisco punch behind the bar. (580 Sutter Street, 415-398-0195)

—DAVID WONDRICH





Veranda Bar at the Hotel Figueroa

LOS ANGELES *You're having:* A martini.



You want a poolside cocktail in sunny L.A. You don't want the bullshit Hollywood scene. So skip the Sunset Strip and head downtown, to the back of the 1920s-era, Moroccan-themed Hotel Figueroa. Fewer model-actresses, sure, but the Fig's ornately tiled bar and tables sprinkled among dim lanterns and tall cacti attract a more interesting neighborhood clientele—plus hoops or hockey people, depending on who just played at Staples Center a few doors down. (939 South Figueroa Street, 213-627-8971)

MATTHEW BELLONI

The Spotted Cat

NEW ORLEANS

You're having: A bottle of beer

Hot, sweaty, and packed with people of all ages (okay, mostly college students with a few old-timers), all getting loose on bottled beer and shots of Jim Beam and whatnot and all grooving to the creaky, wheezy, utterly eccentric old school hot jazz, played by a band that mirrors the crowd. No microphones, so stand close if you can. (623 Frenchmen Street, 504-943-3887)

—DAVID WONDRIKH

The Trail Center

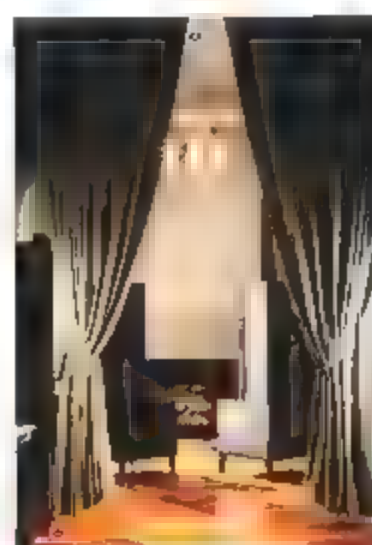
GRAND MARAIS, MINNESOTA

You're having: Beer and pie

At this roadside bar and grill, you're greeted with curious political riddles of northern Minnesota. The place happily sells WHAT WOULD JESUS BOMB? T-shirts that would be a rarity in similarly rural corners of most states, but a notice on the menu sternly admonishes snowmobilers and cross-country skiers (the Sunnis and Shiites of the North Country) to put up with each other at least

until they settle their tabs. To remind you what state you're in, there are stained wood walls crammed with voyageur and lumberjack artifacts. And then a long-underwear contest and the opportunity to order the surprisingly inspired combination of a beer and a slice of berry pie. The Trail Center closes early, but that's okay—you're probably stumbling in here after a fishing trip that started before the sun was up. (7611 Gunflint Trail, 218-388-2214)

—CHARLIE HOMANS



THE SUGGESTION: EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, ORDER FOR HER

WE ORDERED for a woman last night. It was a business thing. We were at the bar waiting for colleagues. Nice bar. She couldn't decide. Or maybe she wasn't sure she even wanted a drink. The bartender was tapping his foot, glancing at the other customers who needed his help. We stepped in. How about a Piña Colada with just a splash of orange juice and a splash of soda? Rocks. He turned, grateful. He made it. She loved it. It probably wasn't the drink itself she loved. I was probably the certainty. The thought it was probably the gift of consideration. But we could be wrong.

The Violet Hour

CHICAGO

You're having: A whiskey smash

The joke among Chicagoans is that it's called the Violet Hour because that's how long it takes to get your drink. The name comes from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, but it's true that no one at this civilized lounge is in a particular rush. That's the whole idea. Bartender Toby Maloney made his bones at Manhattan's legendary Pegu Club, and from the crushing of twice-filtered ice to house-made bitters and fresh-squeezed juices,

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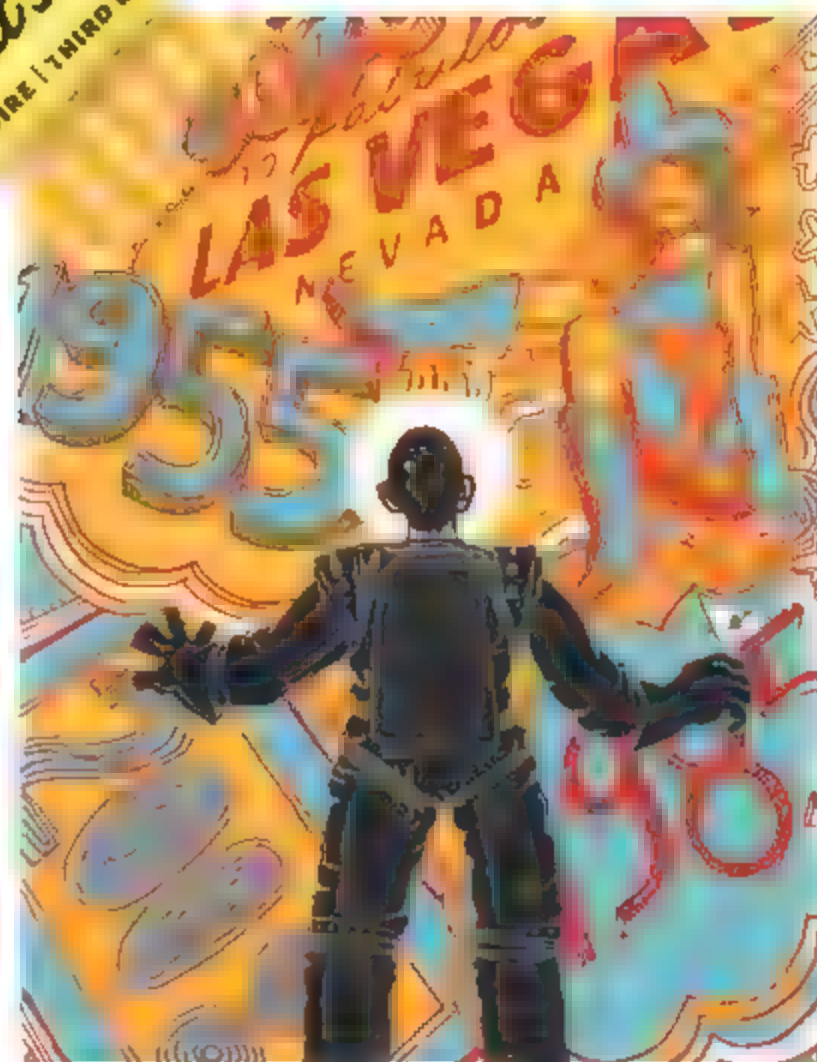
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Best Bars
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The Vegas Bar Time Machine

By Scott Dickensheets

Three bars. Three eras. One crawl. Starting with the present:

2008

Eyecandy Sound Lounge

The tortured nomenclature is the first clue that this place is the epitome of This Very Moment. It's a raucous bar, defined by a bar top woven with shimmering fiber optics, abutting a lounge. It's crammed with technological amusements, interactive tabletops that let you project drawings onto the ceiling, video links with other booths. The drinks are top-shelf, devised by Tony Abou Ganim, perhaps the city's reigning cocktail master (in the Mandalay Bay, 3950 Las Vegas Boulevard South; 702-632-7777).

1977

Peppermill Fireside Lounge

Dim lights. Mirrored ceilings. Miles of blue-and-pink lighting. Cocktail waitresses in black evening dresses. And those fire pits, flames rising from pools of impossibly blue water, surrounded by plush seating. (An infestation of plasma screens spoils the effect slightly, but, hey, it's not like they didn't have TV in the '70s.) Cocktail tip: Order the house specialty, the Scorpion for two. (2985 Las Vegas Boulevard South; 702-735-4177)

1964

Champagnes Café

A short cab ride off the Strip, it will take you even further back—to where you'll find a suspended '50s-'60s thing, despite the TVs and beer signs. There will be a mix of tourists and blue collars, but the atmosphere is quiet, and seedy in a clean way. Perfect for winding down. The excellent jukebox is heavy on Frank and Bing, red neon winks discreetly: the velvety red wallpaper exudes the faded opulence that signifies old Vegas in the blinding glare of the new. (3557 Maryland Parkway South; 702-737-1699)

everything here is deliberate and impeccable. But any bar dedicated enough can restore classic cocktails to greatness. The Violet Hour pulls off a better trick: It also resurrects the art of conversation. The serene space is full of floor-to-ceiling curtains, chandeliers, candles, and high-backed blue leather chairs; the eclectic music is loud enough to comment on but muted enough that you can hear your friends. And the room never feels crowded, for the simple reason that the doorman stops letting people in when every seat is taken. Why don't more places do that? (1520 North Damen Avenue; 773-252-1500) —JEFF RUBY

The Windjammer

ISLE OF PALMS, SOUTH CAROLINA

You're having: Bud Light. Can.

You haven't truly experienced this oceanfront dive until you've been there on a summer Sunday afternoon—when you've walked in from the beach, up the back steps, past the nonstop volleyball tournaments and the band on the deck stage. There's a moment—right at the door—when you go completely blind, your sun-scorched retinas failing to immediately adjust to the dark of the bar. And all at once it comes clear—the Corona bottles, the leathery old men shooting pool, the most beautiful women you've ever seen,

THE SAFETY DRINK

A SIGNIFICANT PART—three quarters? seven eighths?—of America's countless bars have everything you need to get a world-class drink except somebody who can make it. There's the booze shining genially behind the bar. There's the ice rattling around in the shakers. The lemon wedges are crisp, the cherries wickedly inviting. But making great drinks is about the little things, and time and time again that otherwise friendly and efficient bartender will politely sidestep your sour mix straight out of the gun, drown your old-fashioned in soda, under-vermouth your Manhattan or over-vermouth your dry martini. As a remedy, we've come up with a fail-back order: a safety something that's delicious to drink, simple to order, won't annoy the bartender, and is almost impossible to screw up. So wherever experience or intuition tells you that the bar isn't up to real mology, we suggest you order this:

"I have an Elijah Craig" on the rocks with a couple dashes of bitters and a little splash of Grand Marnier, please." If they ask, you can have it with a lemon twist.

—DAVID WONDRIKH

**Or the bourbon of your choice*

wet-haired and bikini'd: a tada! moment that all great entrances deserve. (1008 Ocean Boulevard; 843-886-8948) —DAVID WALTERS

Manuel's Tavern

ATLANTA

You're having: A Sweetwater 420, locally brewed pale ale

I could point out the lawyer feeding the pinball machine in the corner and the

GREAT MOMENTS IN BARTENDING

Hinano Cafe, Venice, California. I went in for a drink by myself, and the bartender just served me my beers. That's it. He didn't try to find out if I was depressed so he could tell me jokes or take my solo status as an invitation to talk about himself. He didn't talk any more than he needed to. He left me alone. And when I was ready to leave, he didn't offer me a buyback. He knew what I wanted. Or he didn't care. Either way, I got exactly what I came for. —ANYA YURCHYSKY

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With Whom We'd Drink

Drinking and the Weather

By David Wondrich

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sunday 12 degrees, gusty winds, snow | Monday 31 degrees, wintry mix | Tuesday 58 degrees, fair | Wednesday 68 degrees, light rain | Thursday 75 degrees, partly cloudy | Friday 85 degrees, tornado warning | Saturday 91 degrees, sunny |
| Hot Laph- rood's toddy | Irish coffee | A rye old- fashioned | Gin Gibson, not too dry | Stein of Spaten | Whatever's in the basement | Pitcher of Hemingway daiquiris |



The bar at the Mayflower Hotel

WASHINGTON, D.C.

You're having: Vodka

It's your first big trip to D.C. Wall-to-wall meetings. But you got smart. You scheduled everything at your hotel. You check into the Mayflower at Connecticut and M, drop your bag, and head to the bar for your first meeting, a forty-five-second commute from your room. Town & Country they call it. A fine place to conduct business. A little dark, which is good, because the ties are ugly. It's Washington. Order a vodka and you get what looks like a mason jar—really a surprisingly large drink. You're under way. You don't know if it's the drink or what, but you feel as if important things happen here. And so they do. Upstairs in his suite, Franklin Roosevelt rehearsed "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" and waited for his inauguration to finally end the Hoover era. President Truman kept a room here after he left office. "The second-best address in town," he called it. A few feet away from where you sit, at a ta-

tele. The dusty pictures on the wall are of people—Jimmy Carter, for instance—telling the same types of stories as they are tonight. Manuel's is the city's last real neighborhood bar, a place where journalists and lawyers and politicians have always communed at the same tap. (602 Northeast Highland Avenue; 404-525-3447)

—JUSTIN HECKERT

GREAT MOMENTS IN BARTENDING

Paul Gustings of Tujague's in New Orleans could be the crustiest bartender on earth. He's also one of the best. Here, as he recently told us over Sazeracs, is an example of why we think that "People always ask me how come I'm not smiling. I say, 'What's your face like when you're at work?' Exactly. Two guys were in here a while ago, business types. Talking loud, drinking Sazeracs. One of 'em says, 'I'll have two Sazeracs and a smile.' So I make the drinks and I put 'em down in front of the guy, and I give him a big ol' smile. Like this. Then I hand him the check. It says, 'Two Sazeracs, eight dollars. One smile, two dollars fifty.' He paid it." DAVID WONDRIK

ble by the window, J. Edgar Hoover took his dainty lunch of chicken soup and cottage cheese every day for twenty years. Here, spies have spied on spies. Mayors have smoked crack. Interns have been interrogated. And assignments by the score. Many involving Kennedys. Spitzer padded right by this dark bar on the way upstairs to end his career. The ballrooms echo like the Overlook Hotel with the ghosts of pure power. You know none of this, and order another tumbler of vodka, very happy to be in the present. (1127 Connecticut Avenue NW; 202-347-3000)

—MARK WARREN

THE COMPLAINT: HOTEL BAR NAMES

WE'RE IN THE ELEVATOR in the Atlanta Sheraton and my friend says, "Meet you in the bar." He points to a happy-hour menu on the wall. "Fandangles."

Fandangles? You're a huge hotel, conglomerate with thousands of smart people in your employ, and the best you've got is a combination of Fandango and Bojangles, both of which would be inexcusable bar names anyway?

The greatest day in a bar owner's life must be the day he names it. And yet so many hotel bars are called something we can't in good conscience invite someone to. The Indianapolis Embassy Suites. Whispers. The Tremont Park in Baltimore. Cebrities. The Midwest Hotel in Columbus. Bowties.

If this weren't a hotel, there'd be no problem. I walk past bars with horrible names like Kaleidoscopes and Marionettes and J.R. McGillicutty's all the time. But because I'm sleeping here, a bargain has been struck: I won't whine about the \$6.50 Heinekens in exchange for the convenience of drinking at a respectable place in the same building as my bed.

—JOE OESTREICH



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PDT NEW YORK CITY *You're having:* Whatever the bartender suggests

Once you get past the slightly gimmicky name (PDT = Please Don't Tell) and the more than slightly gimmicky phone-booth entrance, this cocktail bar that requires table reservations is the epitome of understated, twenty-first-century elegance. Dark leather, dim light, and—most important—some of the most skilled and creative (but usually not too creative, thank God) bartenders in the country. Their classics taste utterly classic, and even their originals are like something Cary Grant would've drunk—one or two of them perhaps during his LSD years, but still. (113 St. Mark's Place; 212-614-0386)

DAVID WONDRIKH

and fruit distillates, all ranked on shelves like so many leather-bound volumes of Victor Hugo. But it leaves out the single malts, the old bourbons, the sipping rums, the calvadoses, so on and so forth. If there's any bar on earth where I'd want to be accidentally locked in for a couple of days, it's this one. (25 North Moore Street, 212-226-5545)

— DAVID WONDRIKH

Nancy Whiskey Pub
NEW YORK CITY

You're having: A pitcher of Guinness

Lower Manhattan once had dozens of bars like this—gruff joints where you could sink a couple of beers and a whiskey or two alongside the regulars without fear of harassment as long as you kept things low to the ground. Now, though, except for one or two places around Wall Street, downtown bars are all cocktail list and design. That makes the Nancy Whiskey a holdout, and a sanctuary. (1 Lispenard Street; 212-226-9943)

— DAVID WONDRIKH

People's Republik
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

You're having: A pint
People have been calling way-left Cambridge “the

Barcade
BROOKLYN

You're having: Captain Lawrence Fresh Chester pale ale

Long before *That '70s Show* was a show, it was, in fact, my life. (Just substitute central Indiana for Wisconsin.) So you can imagine



how pleased I was upon the opening of Barcade, a cavernous joint in a gritty former metal shop in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. They have twenty-eight classic games at any given time, with a few fringier ones they rotate in and out now and then—and those games cost exactly what they originally cost to play: one thin quarter. Also on tap, a constantly changing selection of excellent microbrews and imports; co-owner Paul Kermizian is such a beer geek, he's even filmed a documentary about it, *American Beer*. His favorite game: a rarity called *Tap*. We're all all right, indeed. (388 Union Avenue; 718-302-6464)

—TED ALLEN

Brandy Library
NEW YORK CITY

You're having: A shot of the Frapin XO Grande Champagne Château de Fontpinot

The name is accurate, as far as it goes. There are indeed many, many cognacs, Armagnacs, brandies de Jerez, and other fine grape

THE WORST MOMENT IN BARTENDING

Deeply hungover. I stood behind the bar at Clark's Ale House in Syracuse. I felt stupid. Slow. Around lunchtime, a guy came in and ordered a pint. I pulled it and placed it on his coaster. He took a sip, then swiveled to face the street, turning his back to me. Then casually extended my arm, gripped his glass with my hand, and helped myself to a nice long quaff. I'd say the glass was about halfway back to its coaster when it occurred to me what just happened. My eyes darted to the five or six other people in the bar, including the other bartender, who was slicing beef about ten feet away. No one, it seemed, had noticed. That didn't make me feel much better. So what if I got away with it? I'd just defied the most sacred rule of an honest trade. And why? My body wanted that drink. And it knew my brain was in no position to object.

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people's republic" for years, so the owners ran with the concept. Soviet propaganda posters take up most of the wall space, and time has transformed totalitarian relics into great pop art. The place sits between Central Square and Harvard Square but is not really in either, so you won't run into many college students and instead will probably meet regulars like the free-verse-spouting guy who sometimes takes off his wooden leg and strums it

like a guitar (876 Massachusetts Avenue; 617-491-6969)

—LUKE DITTRICH

Eastern Standard

BOSTON

You're having: A Jack Rose

Most places that make world-class cocktails have a few stools, five or six tables, done. That's hard enough. But to try to do it behind a bar that's forty feet long? Madness. Somehow, though, head bartender Jackson Cannon and his crew make

it work, turning out hanky-pankys by the bucketload. (528 Commonwealth Avenue; 617-532-9100)

—DAVID WONDRICH

Beachcomber

WELLFLEET, MASSACHUSETTS

You're having: A beer

We were lost on Route 6, and a lady told us to go back, take a left, and follow the road to the water. This was out toward the tip of Cape Cod, Atlantic side. At the end of the road, we found a clapboard barn sitting halfway down a sand dune. No, a sand mountain. So much sand above and below us it didn't even feel like America.

Inside, the fried oysters were briny and crunchy. The bottles of Sam Adams were so cold you had to keep switching hands. A band played loud enough to be



heard outside, and a baseball game was on the TV.

After midnight, we all ran up one of the dunes, no man or woman wearing much more than underwear. From up top, the Beachcomber glowed below. Way down on the beach, people were starting a bonfire. We lunged toward it all at once, falling more than running, a tangle of limbs hurtling through the deep, cold sand. (1120 Cahoon Hollow Road, 508-349-6055)

—RYAN D'AGOSTINO

OH, CHRIST, WE'RE LOSING OUR BAR



WE'RE LOSING our bar in a month. The bar at San Domenico restaurant—softly lit, pink granite straight out of 1986. It's moving from Central Park South at Columbus Circle to a no-doubt-better location downtown somewhere we don't know where.

For San Domenico, it's a great thing. You should go there when they open up the new space in January. The food is excellent (get the ravioli with the soft-cooked egg in the middle). The service is perfect. It will be a wonderful place. And we'll take a cab to the new joint. But we'll miss the old place. The lighting. And the granite. And how Renato ("Esquire's Favorite Bartender" Best Bars 1, 2006) starts the pour before we get through the revolving door. And the consolation from Marisa, the owner's charming daughter and maître d', minutes after we leave work.

When we found out that San Domenico was moving the other day, we started thinking about how you cultivate a relationship with a bar. We came up with some criteria for a regular place: It needs to be within walking distance of where you spend most of your time. And you have to get generous drinks there. You just do. And the bartender has to be there every night. If he goes on vacation, you have to notice. And you have to be able to get a seat at the bar. Like 85 percent of the time. And it really helps if there is a charming woman there who kisses you on both cheeks every single time you walk in. And she needs to be good at consoling.

If anybody knows a place like that, let us know.

Sketch above created by a regular customer, two drinks in, June 14, 2007.

ESQUIRE'S TEN FAVORITE COCKTAILS IN BARS

As Director of the Esquire Institute for Advanced Research in Mixology, I visit a considerable number of bars in the course of my duties. Here are the ten best drinks I had in them during the last year.

DAVID WONDRICH

1. Fifty fifty (gin, dry vermouth, orange bitters). *Pegu Club, New York*
2. Rye Manhattan (rye, sweet vermouth, bitters). *Tadich Grill, San Francisco*
3. Holland gin old fashioned (geneva, sugar, bitters). *Lonsdale, London*
4. Southside (gin, lemon, sugar, mint). *'21 Club, New York*
5. Deshler (rye, Dubonnet, Cointreau, bitters). *Zig Zag, Seattle*
6. Aviation (gin, lemon, maraschino, crème de violette). *Jack the Horse Tavern, Brooklyn*
7. Irish coffee (Irish whiskey, coffee, sugar, cream). *Buena Vista, San Francisco*
8. French 75 (cognac, lemon, sugar, champagne). *Arnaud's, New Orleans*
9. Arrack punch (Batavia arrack, rum, lime, sugar, water, nutmeg). *PDT, New York*
10. Spanish coffee (151 rum, Kahlúa, triple sec, coffee, cream). *Huber's, Portland*

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AND, AS MUCH AS THESE THINGS DEFINE YOU, WHAT YOU CHOOSE TO DO
WITH YOUR TALENTS, YOUR TIME, OR YOUR MONEY ALSO ALLOWS YOU TO
FLAUNT YOUR TASTE.

YOUR TALENTS

One very satisfying way to give is to use your skills to help others.

Located just 90 minutes outside of New York City, The Adaptive Sports Foundation (ASF) epitomizes this principle. With over 200 volunteer instructors, the ASF helps children and adults with special needs participate in activities ranging from skiing and snowboarding in the winter to kayaking, fishing and golf in the summer. It also sponsors events, such as the Support Our Troops weekend, to honor our injured soldiers and help them to participate in outdoor activities once more.

Many medical professionals use their talents to give by providing treatment to those less fortunate through organizations such as the House of Friendship, Inc., which provides shelter, food and medical care to homeless children in Honduras.

Yet, you don't have to be a doctor to help save lives. Many volunteer First Aid squads in urban centers all over the U.S. are overextended with only a handful of members responding to thousands of calls a year. The odds are if you've got a specific talent or skill you can use it to help others.

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YOUR TIME

Human effort is a tremendous gift, and there are endless ways to contribute. Volunteering at an after-school arts program, tutoring disadvantaged children, and collecting donations for a local food bank are just a few. If you have the time but are not sure how to give it, finding out is as simple as going to VolunteerMatch.org and typing in your zip code for a list of opportunities in your area.

Keep in mind that even something as simple as taking the time to clean out your closets can help others if done with social consciousness at heart. While many groups welcome clothing and furniture donations, there are other ways to contribute—such as donating instruments to a school music program, or giving your old golf clubs to The First Tee, so that young people of all backgrounds who wouldn't normally have the opportunity can learn to play golf.

Or, you could donate a day per week or per month to serve as a mentor and make a direct and meaningful impact on the life of an at-risk youth. In providing guidance and advice to a young man or woman, and in stressing the importance of pursuing an education, you will empower them to achieve real and lasting success in life.

Other options include chaperoning a school trip or organizing the library of a local charter school, whose mission it is to provide the highest quality education for children in under-served communities.

Giving your time does not automatically mean sacrificing it. In walking for a cause, you reap the benefits of exercise, and by attending a fundraiser, you not only help support a worthy charity, but also enjoy a night out.

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YOUR MONEY

Giving money may seem simple, and let's face it, what charity couldn't benefit from more money? Yet, the truth is that for most donors there is more to giving than just writing a check. In fact, some of the most influential philanthropists claim that it is harder to give away their money than it was to get it.

Here are a few things to consider if money is how you choose to give:

Who do you want to give it to?

What is your passion? Improving education? Fighting poverty? Or something else entirely?

How do you want to give it?

One answer is to donate to an established foundation with a proven track record. Many noted businesspeople and philanthropists do just this by giving significant percentages of their wealth to well respected organizations with high performance standards.

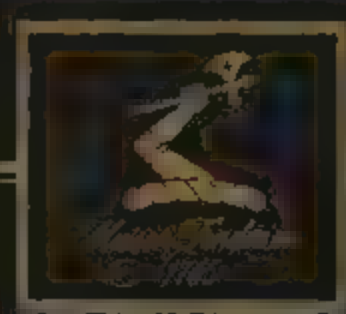
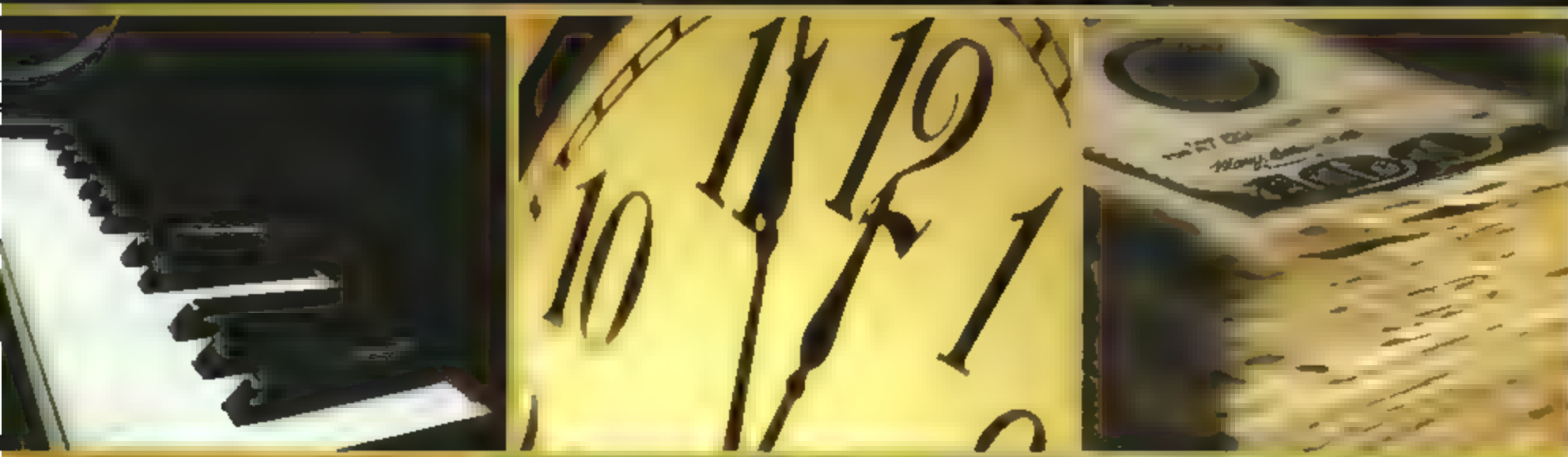
Another option is to donate to an organization that focuses on a specific cause such as Helfer International, the Hispanic Federation, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, The ALS Association or to your local educational or arts foundation.

Yet another, for those who want a more hands on approach, is to establish a foundation or scholarship of your own.

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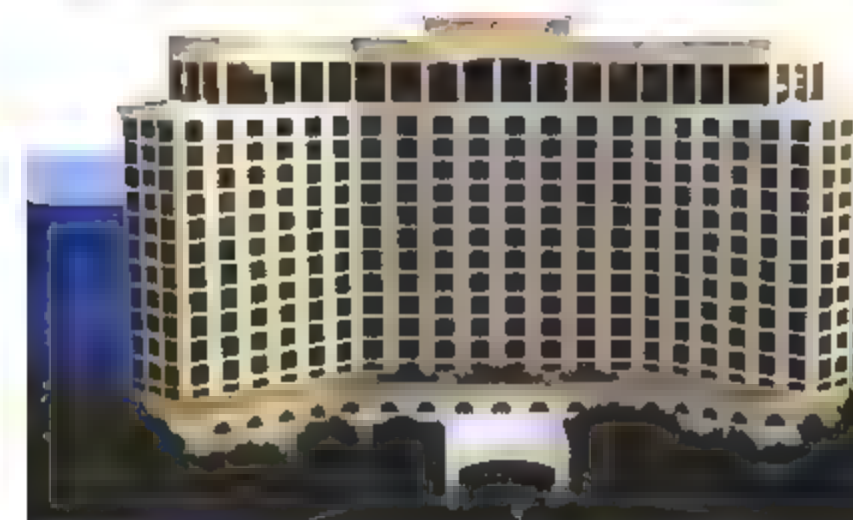


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Esquire

THE CYNIC AND SENATOR OBAMA



THE CYNIC WANTS TO BELIEVE, BUT FAR TOO MUCH
HAS HAPPENED, AND INSPIRATION IS NO LONGER ENOUGH.
THE CYNIC WILL NEED TO BE CONVINCED.

BY CHARLES PIERCE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SCOT TUFANKJIAN



The day after announcing for president in February 2007, Obama greeted a crowd in Chicago. His daughter Sasha, trying to get her father's attention, shouted, "I love you, Daddy!"

THE CYNIC KNOWS

he'll never make Oshkosh. He took the wrong exit and went too far north, and now he has to double back. He gives up, finally, and turns down County Road S in central Wisconsin, looking for a place where he can park and listen to the speech on the radio. It has warmed up well into the double digits, and the snow is sliding slowly off the roofs of the barns along the way. ¶ The speech is not going to be anything the cynic hasn't heard over the past week, in four or five different places all over the state, on the last really good week Barack Obama will have in his campaign to be president of the United States. He's running up the score in Wisconsin, the campaign of Hillary Rodham Clinton having virtually abandoned its efforts when the polls went sour.

The country is not yet familiar with the words of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Tony Rezko isn't on trial in Chicago yet. Obama has not yet collided with the bitter small-town gunmen of Pennsylvania. There's a brief, silly dustup about whether Obama has lifted one of his applause lines—"Don't tell me words don't matter!"—from the campaign of Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts, who happens to be one of his best friends and most enthusiastic supporters. But it dies aborning, and he rolls through Wisconsin on golden wheels, talking about hope and an America free from rancor and bitterness and partisan strife. The cynic drives deeper into the farm-quilted countryside and thinks to himself, Yeah, sure, absolutely. In a place like this, the cynic knows, you can see trouble coming from miles off.

The cynic likes the stump speech, even the fourth time around, and even though it's oddly impervious to the immediate events of the day. The previous day, a gunman had shot up the campus of Northern Illinois University, not far from the Wisconsin border. At the very least, he thought, this was a divisive act that would be of great rhetorical utility, given the theme of the Obama campaign. Flog your cause with the dead, the cynic thought. But it was barely mentioned in the candidate's speeches that day, and the day after that, and the cynic was disappointed.

There is one point in the stump speech, however, that catches the cynic up short every time. It comes near to the end, when Obama talks about cynics. Obama says that cynics believe they are smarter than everyone else. The cynic thinks he's wrong. The cynic doesn't think he's wiser or more clever or more politically attuned than

but they sound to the cynic like something different, as though he were listening for the first time to something out of the Library of Congress, a recording recently exhumed from an obscure archive. The cynic decides that politics is better on the radio, the same way baseball is, where you have to construct the scene in your own head. Radio is for dreamers. Television is for hucksters, and it has leached from American politics all of its creative imagination.

There in the parking lot, the cynic imagines him bounding up on the stage, a dark blade of a man, loose-limbed and jangly, with small ears and an imperious tilt to his chin, as though something is wrong in a distant part of the world that only he can sense. His smile is wide but brief. It doesn't matter if the crowd is large or small, the smile radiates around him, but it encompasses nobody in particular. He stalks the stage with a hand microphone, his long fingers brought to a point, for emphasis, and then widened to make sure that the point made it to the back of the hall. The jokes come at the top, and they are almost always the same jokes.

There is a remove to his movements and a distance to everything he does that mutes his charisma and dampens what might be a frenzy in his crowds into a patient, well-behaved enthusiasm. As much as he might like to say he is, Obama is not leading a movement—not in any real sense, anyway. He is too oddly remote a figure to do that. If he resembles any Kennedy, it's Jack, but Obama's distance is cool and cerebral, not cool and ironic. He's as far from Bobby Kennedy as he is from Chester A. Arthur. It is impossible to imagine Obama, forty years after it happened, wading into the In-

dianapolis ghetto, unannounced and unprepared, to tell a crowd that Martin Luther King had been shot, and to drop Aeschylus on them into the bargain. There is nothing about Obama that bleeds, not publicly. Everything about him that bleeds he left back between the covers of his autobiography. Look for it there, not in this campaign. But mainly, he's not leading a movement because he's telling people that, through him, and through their belief in him, they can reclaim the country's lost greatness, as though the country he's talking to didn't hock all that stuff in the first place so it could afford guns and burglar alarms. He's asking it to value what it's already peddled on the cheap.

He's an impermeable man now. He is smooth and clean, and there's nothing jagged or dangling or out of place. He seems to have emerged into this campaign, and into this moment in history, fully formed. One of the chief—and most deadly accurate—criticisms of Hillary Clinton was that her entire campaign was based on the inevitability of her nomination. The cynic has watched Barack Obama on fifteen different stages in fifteen different places in three states, and even here, even through the static on the radio, the cynic realizes that nobody ever thought Hillary Clinton was as inevitable a president of the United States as Barack Obama believes himself to be.

"I look forward as president to going before the world community and saying, 'America is back. We're ready to lead,'" Obama says on the radio, the static crackling and popping and the transmission fading, and it takes a moment for the cynic to wonder whether or not the world wants America to lead. Maybe the world wants America to sit down and shut up for a while. Obama goes on.

"We will lead in the observance of human rights, and the rule of law, and civil rights and due process, which is why I will close Guantánamo and I will restore habeas corpus and say no to torture. Because if you elect me, you will have elected a president who has taught the Constitution, who believes in the Constitution, and who will restore and obey the Constitution of the United States of America."

There is a wash of applause that the engineer fades out, and the cynic pulls out of the parking lot. As he turns back onto County Road S, he looks up and sees a water tower looming up over the road. There's one in every small town in America. They carry the name of the town and occasionally a tribute to the local high school's championship football team. They're better than maps if you find your-

self lost and wondering where you've gotten yourself this time.

FREEDOM, the water tower reads.

There was a time when the cynic would have read into this the hand of what the powdered-wig set in Philadelphia called "Divine Providence." It would have been more than a landmark. It would have meant something else entirely. But politics has lost its imagination and it is dead to metaphor, and the cynic sees the water tower that says "Freedom," and it's only a measure of how utterly lost he is.

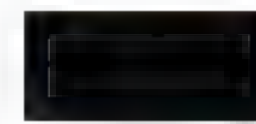
Convince me, he says to himself.

Convince me that I'm wrong. Convince me that there's enough left that's worth saving. Convince me that there are enough people left who care enough to save it.

Convince me. Convince me. Convince me.

And the cynic turns away from the center of town and back out onto the cold, narrow road that leads out of Freedom.

MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ONGOING IS, OR OUGHT TO BE, ABOUT ENDING AN ERA OF COMPLICITY. SOMEONE WILL HAVE TO COUNT THE COST.



SOMEONE WILL HAVE TO measure the wreckage. Someone will have to walk through the ruins. Someone will have to count the cost.

More than anything else, the presidential election ongoing is—or, as a right ought to be—about ending an era of complicity. There is no point anymore in blaming George Bush or the men he hired or the party he represented or the conservative movement that energized that party for what has happened to this country in the past seven years. They were all merely the vehicles through whom the fear and the lassitude and the neglect and the dry rot that had been afflicting the democratic structures for decades came to a dramatic and disastrous crescendo. The Bill of Rights had been rendered a nullity by degrees long before a passel of apparatchik hired lawyers found in its text enough gray space to allow a fecklessly incompetent president to command that torture be carried out in the country's name. The war powers of the Congress had been deeded wholesale to the executive long before Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz and a passel of think-tank cowboys found within them the right of a fecklessly incompetent president to make war unilaterally on anyone, anywhere, forever. The war in Iraq is the powerful bastard child of the Iran-Contra scandal, which went unpunished.

The ownership of the people over their politics—and, therefore, over their government—had been placed in quitclaim long before the towers fell, and the president told the people to be just afraid enough to let him take them to war and just afraid enough to reelect him, but not to be so afraid that they stayed out of the malls.

It had been happening, bit by bit, over nearly forty years. Ronald Reagan sold the idea that “government” was something alien. The notion of a political commonwealth fell into a desuetude so profound that even Bill Clinton said, “The era of Big Government is over” and was cheered across the political spectrum, so that when an American city drowned and the president didn’t care enough to leave a birthday party, and the disgraced former luxury-horse executive who’d been placed in charge of disaster relief behaved pretty much the way a disgraced former luxury-horse executive could be expected to behave in that situation, it could not have come as any kind of surprise to anyone honest enough to have watched the country steadily abandon self-government over the previous four decades. The catastrophe that is the administration of George W. Bush is not unprecedented. It was merely inevitable. The people of the United States have been accessorial in the murder of their country.

Someone will have to measure the wreckage. Someone will have to walk through the ruins. Someone will have to count the cost.

Most of the damage was in plain sight in 2004, when Barack Obama became a political star by giving a speech in which he told America what a great country it was, and what great people were in it, and then the country went out and reelected George W. Bush anyway. Then came even further revelations—of warrantless spying, of a Justice Department turned into little more than a political chop shop, of torture and black prisons, of the length and breadth and sheer audacity of the lies that led to a seemingly endless war. The Democrats even took over the Congress in 2006. And nothing, it seemed, changed. Nobody was held responsible. White House

THE CYNIC IS NO LESS A SUCKER THAN ANY OF HIS COUNTRYMEN FOR APPEALS TO THE BETTER ANGELS OF HIS NATURE. BUT THIS TIME AROUND, HE WANTED THOSE ANGELS TO BE CARRYING FLAMING SWORDS.



aides simply ignored congressional subpoenas. Documents vanished. E-mails were accidentally deleted. The sound of the shredders working in a hundred different offices in the executive branch of the government must today sound like the starting line at Daytona five seconds before they drop the flag.

Someone will have to measure the wreckage. Someone will have to walk through the ruins. Someone will have to count the cost.

That is the election that the cynic thought we’d have in 2008, an epochal choice of wisdom over stupidity, energy over apathy, grimly serious business over shiny trivialities. He was no less a sucker than any of his countrymen for appeals to the better angels of his nature. But this time around, he wanted those angels to be carrying flaming swords. He thought he’d measured the wreckage, walked through the ruins, and counted the cost. He didn’t think he was smarter than his countrymen or shrewder about his politics or wiser in the ways of the world. The cynic simply thought he was adequate to the times, and he didn’t want to be “moving on” just yet. He didn’t want an election

that offered absolution without confession, without penance.

Instead, he got an incredible collection of clowns on the Republican side; he was at one debate in which three of them, 30 percent of the Republican field, declined to state publicly that they believed in evolution. (Looking at the bunch of them on stage, the cynic began to have his own doubts.) Mitt Romney of Massachusetts spent an entire campaign revealing himself to be the Piltown man of American politics. Mike Huckabee, a likable preacher who played bass guitar, was an appealing fellow with dangerously loopy ideas. In the end, the Republicans settled on John McCain, who’d traded his shiny armor from 2000 for a tattered choir robe, and who was promising to run on being better at everything at which George W. Bush had been bad. The cynic had spent time with McCain almost a decade earlier, and he had liked him tremendously, and now the cynic didn’t recognize him at all.

On the other side, an equally sizable field thinned itself down pretty quickly. Hillary Rodham Clinton was bright and enthusi-

A crowd lines up to take pictures at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. “Living the Dream” Banquet at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, January 2008.

astic, and her campaign seemed to be doing everything correctly, but she was engaged without being particularly engaging, her campaign something out of 1972. Barack Obama, as the tennis coaches say, wrong-footed her almost from the start.

The cynic had been in the hall for Obama’s big speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004. It was beautifully written, impeccably delivered, and its rhetoric was thrilling. Obama took the crowd through the incredible ethnographic stewpot of his upbringing—Kenyan father, white Kansan mother, a brief stint living in Indonesia, high school in Hawaii, and then Columbia and Harvard Law—and when he got to the peroration, the cynic knew that Obama had won the country as surely as he had lost the cynic himself.

“Yet, even as we speak,” Obama said, “there are those who are



Michelle Obama watches as her husband speaks at his first campaign rally in Iowa, Waterloo, February 10, 2007.

preparing to divide us, the spinmasters and the negative-ad peddlers who embrace the politics of anything goes. Well, I say to them tonight, there is not a liberal America and a conservative America, there's the United States of America."

(A month later, at the Republican convention, the cynic saw fat little delegates and their fat little wives wearing Purple Heart Band-Aids to mock John Kerry's war wounds. He saw the Swift Boat ads. The country bought it. The country moved on.)

"There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America, there's the United States of America."

(Three months later, the cynic watched black voters be systematically disenfranchised in key precincts all over the country. There was no anger. There were no demonstrations. There was no great rising in defense of a fundamental right. There was, instead, nothing. The country bought it. The country moved on.)

"The pundits like to slice and dice our country into red states and blue states: red states for Republicans and blue states for Democrats. But I've got news for them, too. We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around in our libraries in the red states. We coach Little League in the blue states, and, yes, we've got some gay friends in the red states. We are all of us one people, all of us defending the United States of America."

(Over the next several months, the cynic watched as the Republicans masterfully used the threat of gay people getting married to gin up turnout where they needed it the most. It was a creepy, shabby

election that wasn't about anything that was really happening in the country. The country bought it. The country moved on.)

So when Obama caught fire in Iowa this year and then moved along through the process, bedeviling the Clintons and selling out the halls, the cynic wondered when he was finally going to measure the wreckage, walk through the ruins, or count the cost. Obama was critical enough of what had happened over the previous seven years; his early opposition to the war in Iraq gave him an unbeatable trump card against Edwards and Clinton and tremendous cachet with younger and more liberal voters. But as Obama's campaign gathered strength, the cynic kept hearing that 2004 speech again, in bits and pieces, in every stump speech Obama gave, and he saw that what Obama was offering was exactly what the country did not need. He was offering absolution without confession, without penance. In 2007, when asked about the possibility—just the possibility—of impeaching George W. Bush and/or Dick Cheney, Obama scoffed at the idea, not entirely because it was constitutionally unsound but also because it was impolite and a nuisance and might make many people angry at one another, and he was, after all, running to help save us from ourselves.

"We would, once again, rather than attending to the people's business, be engaged in a tit-for-tat, back-and-forth, nonstop circus."

He was offering a guilty country a nolo plea. Himself. Absolution without confession.

The cynic declined the deal. There were not enough people in handcuffs yet.

The cynic will admit that it's all great politics. Tell America that it is a great country that simply has lost its way for a spell. Tell the American people that they are a great people who are better than

those hucksters who come to divide us. It has a marvelous anesthetic appeal. Swirl down through the clouds of memory and forget that the country allowed itself to follow George Bush over the cliff not merely because it was shocked by the attacks of September 11, 2001, but because it was too pissing-down-the-shoes scared to do anything else. Forget about how eagerly the American people cheered the brutish and the nasty, how simple it was to sell raw animal vengeance dressed up as geopolitical wisdom, and how dumbly everyone followed until well after it was revealed that the people selling it didn't know enough about the world to throw to a cat. This was the era of complicity. Can Obama end it, thought the cynic, without admitting it ever existed?

We have not been a great country for a very long time, the cynic believes, and it does us no good to claim otherwise. We are not an honest and decent people in our politics, in the way we deal with one another as a political commonwealth. We will trade away our most precious rights in exchange for a bag of magic charms, and even when we find out that these include the black prison, the waterboard, and the secret microphone, we'll think we got the better of the deal. We'll swap our obligation to intelligent self-government for any huckster's trick that makes us laugh or keeps us entertained in our cars for the evening drive-time shift. We hold this truth to be self-evident—that all men are out to get what's ours.

Obama will find this out, the cynic thought. He will discover exactly how much he overrates the country as a democracy and its people as citizens. It will happen. He may not even understand it until it happens to him, but it will happen. The cynic just happened to be there when it began.

Snow danced in cyclonic bursts all up and down the alleys by the river in Milwaukee. The Pabst Theater, a great old palace that's been renovated to within an inch of its former glory, was hosting a rally at which Michelle Obama was the keynote speaker. She's a formidable story herself, the daughter of a city worker in Chicago, she went through Princeton and Harvard Law. The crowd was hers from the minute she hit the stage. Then she said, "For the first time in my adult life, I am proud of my country because it feels like hope is finally making a comeback."

In the hall, it was an altogether unremarkable moment. But the cynic wrote it in his notebook and circled it in red. He saw in it the kind of cheap political junk food that the American people, the ones who have gay friends in the red states and the ones who worship that awesome God in the blue states, will wolf down with gluttonous abandon.

Sure enough, Michelle Obama's unremarkable remark got hung on a string with the fact that her husband doesn't wear a flag on his lapel and that he once failed to put his hand over his heart while the national anthem played. Not long after that, a loon on the *National Review's* Web site speculated that Obama's mother married his father because they were secret communists, because back then only communist white women married communist black men. Someone else made note of the fact that when Obama was in high school in Hawaii, he knew a man named Frank Marshall Davis, who'd been named as a communist by some House committee or another in 1951, and that, as a state senator, Obama once had dinner with a former member of the Weathermen. Tony Rezko went on trial in Chicago. A brave woman named Samantha Power, who'd spent more than a decade looking the worst of which humanity was capable squarely in the eye in places like Rwanda and Bosnia, was forced to resign from the campaign because she called Hillary Clinton a "monster."

Then, of course, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright hit the big time. It

turned out that Obama's pastor had said some things from the pulpit that you pretty much have to be a white preacher in this country to get away with, and there were YouTube clips of them, and they dominated nearly the entire month before the Pennsylvania primary. Obama responded by giving the most serious speech on American race relations since Lyndon Johnson drew his big self up in front of the Congress and said, "We shall overcome."

And all more than a few people took away from it was the fact that Obama had said some things about his grandmother that these people thought were ungracious.

Of course, it was all bullshit. Those people didn't care a damn about Obama's grandmother, or about the Reverend Wright, or about intolerance from the pulpit, for all of that. (For example, the good Catholic boys Chris Matthews and Tim Russert—and John and Robert Kennedy, for all that—regularly sat in the church of their youth through a Good Friday service that was so thorough an exercise in formalized Jew-bashing that even the Vatican caught on, albeit twenty centuries late.) It was all about how we do politics, and

therefore, about how we govern ourselves, or, more to the point, how we choose to do neither one. This is what you get, the cynic thought, when you don't insist on measuring the wreckage, walking through the ruins, or counting the cost.

Obama's campaign had been a masterpiece of imagination, creating a future out of an ambivalent present, telling the country and its people that they should find hope in one another—"Change happens from the bottom up"—and it was being partly undone by the trivial and the immediate. Now he was in that place in which Albert Murray said all the heroes of the blues end up, even ones who worship an awesome God in the blue states:

"Even as flexibility or the ability to swing (or to perform with grace under pressure) is the key to that unique competence which generates the self-reliance and thus the charisma of the hero... so may skill in the art of improvisation be that which will enable contemporary man to be at home with his sometimes tolerable but never quite certain condition of not

being at home in the world."

The cynic found Obama more fascinating than ever. He was still the front-runner for the nomination, but any notion that the campaign would take place on a higher plane was lost somewhere between Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. The cynic wondered if Obama's campaign had not found itself in a blind alley of its own devising. By offering his complicit, fearful nation and its complicit, brutish people absolution without confession, without penance, Obama guaranteed that the sins would stay, and they would be committed over and over again, and against him this time. Poor bastard, thought the cynic. When the cynic heard Obama talk about Dr. King's "fierce urgency of now," he wondered first and always why Obama spent so much time talking about great men—Abraham, Martin, John, and Bobby—who'd all been shot in the head.

WHY THIS SAINTLY AVERSION to politics? Why the imperious rejection of the fight? Was the man incapable of it? Because if that was the case, the Republicans would feast on his bones come fall. In any case, the cynic had had his fill of the new painless politics

and had grown wary of the self-declared phenomenon who was its chief purveyor. The cynic wondered if Obama was tough enough, so he went to the far South Side of Chicago, where Obama did his community organizing. Snow was mixing with rain, and a woman stood on the sidewalk, screaming at the raw and empty air, trash blowing all around her shoes until she screamed at the trash and then ran down an alley. He stopped by the Lilydale First Baptist Church a few blocks away, where Pastor Alvin Love was finishing up Sunday service, and Pastor Love talked about the young Barack Obama, who'd come to him to do community organizing through the various churches in the area. "Barack kind of broke down those barriers for us, because it was easy for us to get into our own agenda," Love recalled. "And it was all the neighborhoods on the South Side, and all the pastors were saying the same thing, so finding out that we had more in common than we thought was an eye-opening experience." Obama also worked in the Altgeld Gardens, a housing development built in 1945 atop an ecological hellspout where two thousand families lived on an old landfill and hard by fifty-three different sites that had been designated as "toxic" by one study of the area. He left an impression as a stubborn, stiff-necked grinder with a gift for changing tactics on the fly. His very first meeting at Altgeld Gardens did not go well, Pastor Love recalled. An arrogant city bureaucrat got everybody's back up. Half the people wanted to walk out, and the other half wanted to deck the guy.

"Barack wouldn't quit," Love said. "He pulled us off to the side and he said, Well, we messed that up. We didn't see that coming. We need to strategize right now about how to deal with stuff like this and hold people accountable so this kind of thing doesn't happen again."

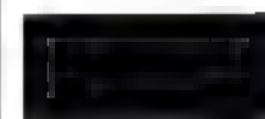
Altgeld Gardens, the cynic believed, was tough enough. The far South Side was tough enough.

The cynic wondered if Obama was smart enough, so he went to Harvard Law School, where Obama went and shone more brightly than he ever had before, thriving in a lush rain forest of towering egos in which every second person already has the Supreme Court in his eyes. Students bustled between classes, heads bowed, ambition fairly crackling from every pore. He stopped by the office of Professor Laurence Tribe, Obama's mentor at the place and someone who is on the short list every time a Democratic president gets a chance to appoint someone to the Supreme Court. In 1989, Tribe took Obama on as a research assistant, putting him to work on a paper entitled, "The Curvature of Constitutional Space: What Lawyers Can Learn from Modern Physics," which sounds like something Learned Hand wrote from Mars. "To deal with it, one had to get a reasonable command of the general theory of relativity and Heisenbergian physics," Tribe explained. "So I got to know him in a context that really tested the qualities of his mind. It wasn't a grinding kind of a job. It required a very wide-ranging intellectual curiosity and imagination." Heisenbergian physics, the cynic believed, was smart enough. Harvard Law was smart enough.

He wondered if Obama was shrewd enough, so he went and he talked to Congressman Mike Capuano, a former mayor of the blue-collar town of Somerville in Massachusetts, who went to Congress in 1998 because he was a better street pol than the prettier, wealthier candidates he ran against in a massive brawl to succeed young Joe Kennedy to his uncle Jack's old congressional seat. Capuano is no dreamer. He's a hard-eyed, calculating man who endorsed Obama only because Obama convinced him that there was a chance he could win.

"I'm not on some sort of a mission," Capuano said. "I'm looking to combine what I think is a good person, a good politician, with somebody who can win. And I try to figure it out. I try to figure out if the rest of America is capable of really getting over it and voting for a black man. And I realize there's a shot that the answer might be yes."

HE IS THE COUNTRY'S WALKING ABSOLUTION. THAT'S HIS REASON, THE CYNIC THINKS, BUT IT'S NOT MINE. THERE HAS TO BE PENANCE. BEING BARACK OBAMA IS NOT ENOUGH.



"questions" about Obama's "patriotism." (Reading the elite political press had long ago forced the cynic to think with quotation marks.) The cynic knew where the "questions" about Obama's "patriotism" were coming from. They were coming from the "conservative America" that Obama had told the Democratic convention four years earlier didn't really exist, from the fat little delegates and their fat little wives who thought the Purple Heart Band-Aids were oh so very clever. They were coming from the people who did their best to disqualify black people from voting and gay people from marrying, in those red states that Barack Obama had told the Democratic convention were only an imaginary construct meant to divide us, as though the country didn't open its eyes wide and walk into the divide, skipping and whistling like the children of Hamelin.

"Patriotism?" the cynic thought. "Patriotism" to what? To the forms of democracy and not the tattered remnants of its substance? To the words of the Constitution but not its neutered spirit? Blind, stupid, deaf, and dumb loyalty to shapes and colors and band music and bright shiny flag lapel pins, but nothing left for the bedraggled ideals dragged through the mud at Guantánamo and Bagram and a hundred other places?

"Patriotism."

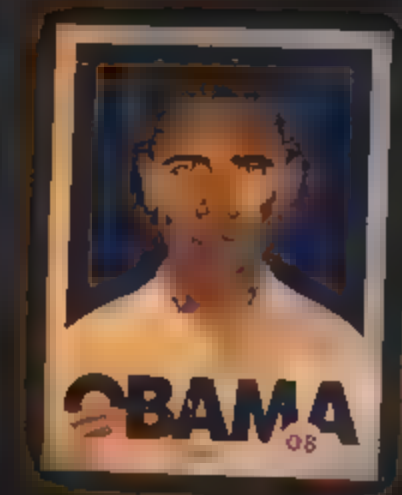
The cynic read the words and he heard the quotation marks in his head, clanging at either end of the word like cell doors closing.

"My country, 'tis of thee / Sweet land of dumbassery / Of thee, I fucking sing," thought the cynic.

Convincing Mike Capuano, the cynic believed, was shrewd enough. Somerville is shrewd enough.

So the cynic did due diligence, and at the end of it, he watched the campaign go on from Wisconsin and he realized that tough enough and smart enough and shrewd enough weren't anywhere near enough. Not in the country in which the campaign was now taking place. Not in the country that made the intemperate eruptions of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright from a pulpit in Chicago more relevant to its choice of the next president than the speechifying of Moqtada al-Sadr from a balcony in Baghdad. Not in a country that didn't care if there was an actual heart left in its politics as long as the candidate put his hand over where that heart should have been or wore a pin above it on his lapel. The cynic believed that journalism wasn't enough. He felt like that woman he'd seen in Chicago, screaming into the sleet while the trash piled up around her shoes.

Patriotism, the cynic read. There were "questions" about Obama's "patriotism."



In *Time* magazine, right on cue, Joe Klein spectacularly opined that Obama hadn't been "explicit" or "corny" enough in his expressions of patriotism to win over the good white burghers of western Pennsylvania, which seemed to indicate that Joe Klein firmly believes that western Pennsylvania is populated by lizard-brained morons. And right on cue, Obama went to North Dakota and told a crowd, "I love this country, not because it's perfect, but because we've always been able to move it closer to perfection."

When was the last time that happened, the cynic wondered. What country exactly is Barack Obama talking about here? This country has rolled back its constitutional order to a point where you'd think Thomas Jefferson had died as a child. It's rolled back its jurisprudence to a point about a month before the Magna Carta. It has done so willingly, even eagerly.

Cynicism was noble, the cynic believed. It was to be directed only at targets worthy of it and not at a candidate's failure to provide what the elite political press could sell to a complicit nation as the proper proletarian dumb show. It was to be directed at how seriously Barack Obama has misjudged the country he so obviously wants to lead, which is not the country he talks about but the spavined America that actually exists, because that's the country in which the American people, in a hundred different acts of omission and commission, have freely determined that they want to live. A country of stunted anger and, yes, bitter denial of all that it's done to itself. That's the country in which Barack Obama is running now. If he sees it from the stage when he tilts his head and looks off into the far distance, he gives no sign of it.

He talks forever about "change." Change from what? the cynic wondered. Obama never really says. He criticizes Bush, and his people, and his policies. He runs through the litany: Iraq. Katrina. The collapse of the subprime mortgage industry. The overall economy, now barely clouding the mirror under its nose. He's tough when he does it, and smart, and shrewd. But it ends there. Obama never addresses the era of complicity, the fact of the country's accessorial conduct in its own murder. He just tells the country that it's really better than all that. And the cynic's questions are never really answered. And he talks forever about "hope." The cynic hears it and remembers the legend of Pandora. Hope was the jewel left in the box after she'd opened it, but Pandora never noticed Hope until she'd loosed all the demons onto the world.

Why would anyone have faith in America, which is not tough but fearful, not smart but stupid, and not shrewd but willing to fall for almost anything as long as it comes wrapped in a flag? Why would anyone have faith in Americans? Barack Obama says that he has that faith because of his own life, because he was able to rise to the point where he can be thought of as president of the United States. He is the country's walking absolution. That's his reason, the cynic thinks, but it's not mine. There has to be confession. There

Through the fall of last year, the movement grew. An Iowa campaign staff member and her homemade necklace. Ray Noland, a Chicago artist, started his own guerrilla marketing campaign, covering Chicago and Des Moines with his posters. Obama signs led the way to Senator Tom Harkin's steak fry in Indianola, Iowa.

has to be penance. Being Barack Obama is not enough. Not damn close to enough.

CONGRESSWOMAN GWEN MOORE is revving up the crowd in Milwaukee, pitting Barack Obama against Hillary Clinton as though she were setting up the main event in the parking lot at Caesar's. She starts with Clinton.

"In this corner," Moore begins, "wearing the helmet of fear, the breastplate of pride, wielding the shield of special-interest dollars and carrying the sword of bitter partisanship!" The crowd boos lustily. There's no room for metaphor in the cynic's politics anymore. His head is beginning to throb. Congresswoman Moore is just getting warmed up.

"And in this corner," she begins.

(Oh, dear Lord, no.)

"The candidate of the people. Skinny young man. Big ears. Funny name. Armed with the experience of humble beginnings. Educated in Ivy League suites. Trained in legislative seats. Toughened in inner-city streets."

(Okay, this is more like it.)

"Wearing the helmet of good judgment."


(Uh oh.)

"The breastplate of hope. Wielding the shield of unity. Carrying the sword of truth. And feet marching to the beat of change!"

Obama takes the stage and the hall explodes, the way all the halls have exploded in this, the last really good week he will have. All the rest of the upcoming weeks and months will be about becoming aware that the country he imagines is not the America that is, and that it hasn't been for a very long time. And the cynic realizes at last that he is more naive than anyone else here, particularly more than the slim, smooth candidate himself, stalking the stage in his edgeless way and looking out over the crowd at something in his private distance. The cynic believes in an old, abandoned country that's no less illusory than the redeemed one Obama is promising to this crowd. Isn't that something? the cynic thinks. Maybe that's enough, that single revelation, just a flicker of the lost imagination. For the last time, in the roar of the crowd, it comes back to him again. Convince me America is not an illusion. Convince me that it never was. Convince me that you're not a pious mirage. Convince me that we're not. Now that you brought it up, convince me.

Convince me.

Convince me.

Convince me. 



Things have gotten better. Nobody can deny that. But hate crimes are up, race relations are souring, and the Speech of the Year brought identity politics back to the dinner table. Bigotry—real, perceived, and a mixture of the two—is thriving in America, and this is what it looks like.

The New Bigotry Primer

Why We Hate

By JOHN RIDLEY

Semantics, maybe, but for the sake of discussion, let's separate isms—racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and such—from bigotry. Isms being the most antagonistic manifestation of prejudice: cross burnings and lynchings, bashing and swastikas scrawled across walls. Comparatively, bigotry is more subtle. Often insidious. It's the service at a restaurant or store that's so slow in coming, you leave before it arrives. Bigotry is the guy who cuts in front of you at Starbucks

because you don't even register to him. Bigotry is our personal assumptions and the softly spoken question: "Why do those people always [fill in the blank]?" Never mind that our leaders come from every race and background, we still have trouble getting along with the "other" next door. Why? Why do we cling to bigotry?

Because bigotry, plainly, is convenient. It is a near-effortless way to both elevate one's stature and make a pity grab in this culture of victims that we have become. It is an all purpose tool—a sword and a shield; we dig the heft of it in

our hand as we give a chop to "those people" for being too loud or too urban or too not like us. It's so much easier to swing our hate than it is to understand others.

Similarly, bigotry—or the reflexive, defensive accusation of bigotry—is a prime source of instant sympathy from others within our group. A jutted finger and the charge of prejudice, along with a big show of playing the vic, make for a call to rise up and defend the injured, even when the wound is imaginary. How many so-called "leaders" have made bank by lying in wait to whip up a Day of Outrage over every innocent though unfortunate remark?

67%

of black Americans say blacks are "almost always" or "frequently" discriminated against when applying for a job. 36% of Hispanics and 20% of whites agree.

Source: Pew Research Center, "Optimism." See page 121 for survey details.

Illustrations by JAMES VICTORE



And the worst of it is that for every Jeremiah Wright who opens his pie-hole and cuts loose with some inane invective, there's an educated and seemingly enlightened public figure using bigotry expertly. Geraldine Ferraro had no problem claiming Barack Obama had ascended solely because of the color of his skin. When her reasoning, or lack thereof, was openly challenged, Ferraro shot back. "They're attacking me because I'm white." If only medals were awarded in Beijing '08 for dexterous use of prejudice.

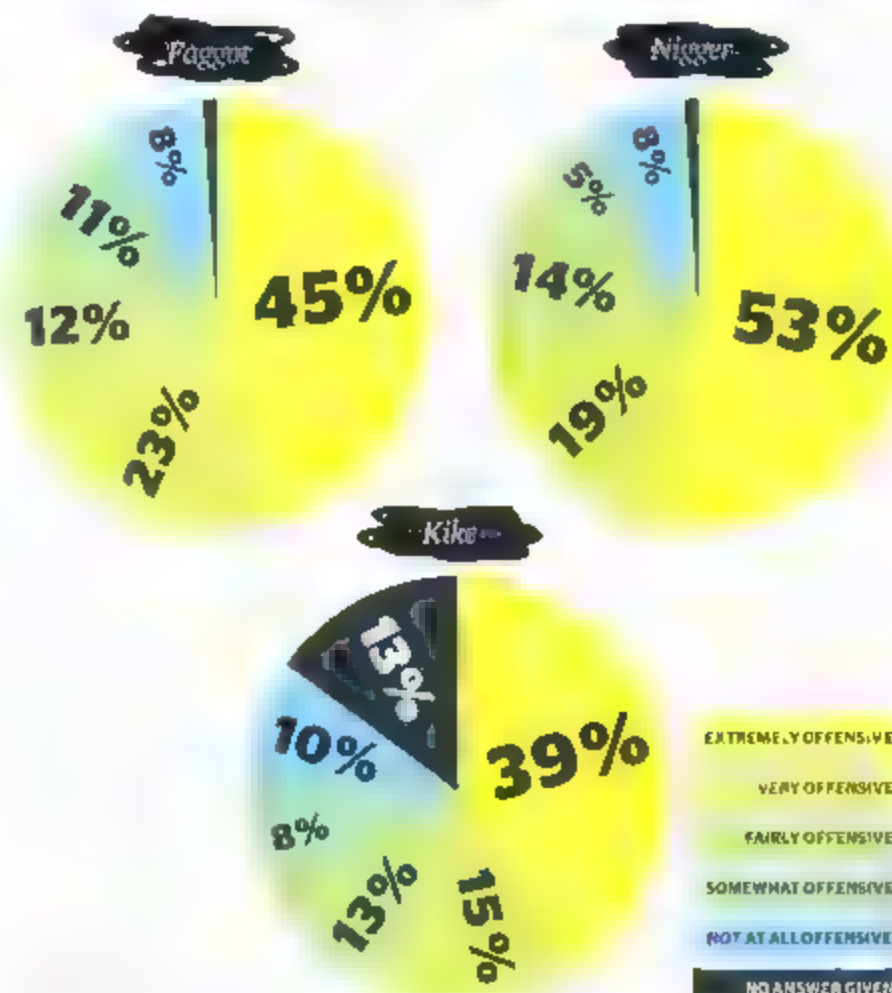
And so we remain caught up in questions of bigotry: Is the media more biased against race or gender? Who's got a harder time getting the white male vote, and why won't Hispanics cast their ballots for the brother man? Forget about the economy, Iraq, or health care. Bigotry remains where it's at. An ego stroke, a cloak for victims, and a French tickler for the media. One mind-set does all that. It's little wonder we can't shed ourselves of bigotry. Why toss out something when it works so well?

59%

of white registered voters say they were disturbed a "great deal" or "somewhat" by Jeremiah Wright's statements. 34% of black voters agree. Source: NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey

YUP, STILL OFFENSIVE

BUT WHAT'S THE MOST OFFENSIVE SLUR OF ALL?



Source: Harris Poll

From Sea to Shining Sea

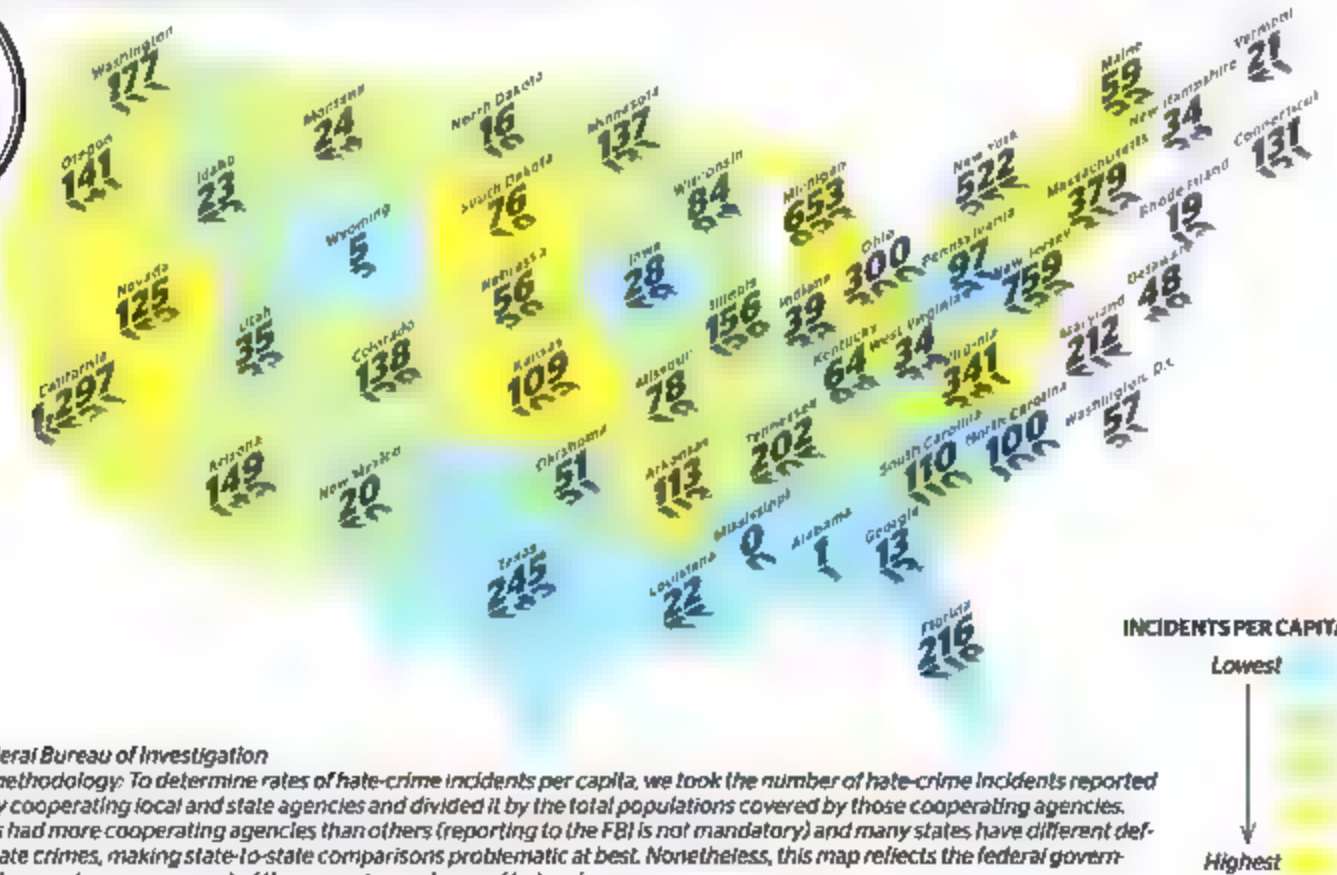
7,722 hate-crime incidents were reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 2006—an 8% increase from 2005.

2,640 were anti-black (up from 2,630 in 2005). 967 were anti-Jewish (up from 848 in 2005). 890 were anti-white (up from 828 in 2005).

747 were anti-male homosexual (up from 621 in 2005). 576 were anti-Hispanic (up from 522 in 2005).

156 were anti-Islamic (up from 128 in 2005). 163 were anti-female homosexual (up from 155 in 2005).

HERE'S WHERE IT HAPPENS



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

About the methodology: To determine rates of hate-crime incidents per capita, we took the number of hate-crime incidents reported to the FBI by cooperating local and state agencies and divided it by the total populations covered by those cooperating agencies. Some states had more cooperating agencies than others (reporting to the FBI is not mandatory) and many states have different definitions of hate crimes, making state-to-state comparisons problematic at best. Nonetheless, this map reflects the federal government's most accurate measurement of the current prevalence of hate crimes.

37%

of black Americans believe that because of increased diversity with in the black community, blacks can no longer be thought of as a single race.

Source: Pew Research Center, "Optimism"

52%

of black Americans think about their race at least once a day, compared with just 25% of Asian Americans, 24% of Hispanics, and 8% of whites.

Source: Zogby

38%

of Asian Americans believe it's okay for races to live separately so long as everyone has equal opportunities. 35% of whites and 33% of blacks agree.

Source: Zogby

The Black-Brown Divide

By ERNESTO QUIÑONEZ

You won't find too many portraits of Bill Clinton hanging in Cuban American households—adiós, Elián!—but in Puerto Rican homes, he's as familiar a face as any Catholic saint. RFK is the martyr of choice on Mexican Americans' walls, while the late white-skinned president Joaquín Balaguer presides over Dominican barbershops across Manhattan's Washington Heights. The Latino-American community is diverse and divided, some forty-four million people and twenty different nationalities struggling in their own way with immigration, assimilation, and political destiny. Yet for all the differences, there's one thing (language aside) that many Latinos have in common: You won't find too many pictures of dark-skinned leaders in their homes.

Growing up in Spanish Harlem in

the eighties, I don't recall too many Latinos of any nationality going crazy over Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. I recall a dark-skinned Panamanian church elder cheating on his wife with a white woman; when his dark-skinned Puerto Rican wife found out, she forgave him and dyed her hair blond, all the better to mimic the prize of the white world. I recall the urban legend of the black-skinned Latino with a pregnant wife who entered a botanica to ask the orishas to grant him a white baby. I recall terms like "un negro fino," or "a delicate black," meaning light black skin, thin lips, and a sharp nose, and I recall "un negro bembón," which meant the opposite. I recall pecking orders and historic beefs and a belief that light skin was somehow preferable to dark, and I recall nobody thinking twice about it.

The 2000 census made that pretty clear. Forty-eight percent of Hispanics checked themselves off as white, while

only 2 percent identified themselves as black. We can blame the form—not enough boxes, not enough choices—but the bottom line is that almost half of us can't shake the idea that we'd be better off if we were white. Is it any wonder that some Obama staffers can't sleep at night?

Blame it on our homeland. When Latin Americans quit the old countries and put down roots on U.S. soil, they brought a centuries-old, unreconstructed suspicion of dark skin with them. And it still goes on. Just recently I traveled back to my hometown, and I saw two homeless-looking African-Americans who had wandered in front of a cab and would not budge. The Dominican cabdriver, who wasn't much lighter than they were, started cursing, calling them *maldito trepa palos*, which roughly translates to "damn tree climbers." It was more vile in Spanish, trust me. But it was one that I had never heard before.

A RECENT HISTORY of OUTRAGEOUS BEHAVIOR



MICHAEL RICHARDS

Date of incident: November 17, 2006
What he said: "Nigger, seven times."
Public opinion: 69% of Americans found his words offensive; 28% thought they weren't offensive.

DON IMUS

Date of incident: April 4, 2007
What he said: "Nappy-headed hos."
Public opinion: 64% of Americans found his words offensive; 33% thought they weren't offensive.

MEL GIBSON

Date of incident: July 28, 2006
What he said: "The Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world."
Public opinion: 63% of Americans found his words offensive; 34% thought they weren't offensive.

ISAIAH WASHINGTON

Date of incident: October 2006
What he said: "Faggot."
Public opinion: 54% of Americans found his word choice offensive; 40% thought it wasn't offensive.

GEORGE ALLEN

Date of incident: August 11, 2006
What he said: "Macaca," twice.
Public opinion: 37% of Americans said that his statement was offensive; 38% thought otherwise.

Source: Harris Poll

What Are We Chopped Liver?

BY SCOTT RAAB

ABRAHAM FOXMAN has been the Anti-Defamation League's national director since 1987. Polish-born, he was a "hidden child," given by his parents to his Catholic nanny to hide him from the Nazis. After the war, he and his parents emigrated to the United States.

Myrna Shinbaum is the ADL's director of media relations and public information. She insisted that she not be part of this story, but, what the hey, she came to the lunch—at a northern-Italian joint in Midtown—and Esquire bought. Plus, she had plenty to say. She's from the Bronx.

Scott Raab, a Cleveland native, has been a Jew since 1952, when he was born. Here, the three break bread and discuss the state of anti-Semitism in the world.

ABRAHAM FOXMAN: We do polls in Europe, we do polls here. In Europe, it's very high, classic anti-Semitism. Here, our latest numbers are 14, 15 percent.

MYRNA SHINBAUM: 15 percent.

SCOTT RAAB: Of what?

AF: Are Infected—Americans are Infected.

MS: Who hold strong anti-Semitic views.

AF: That's about thirty-five million Americans.

SR: That's stunning.

AF: It's better than when I started at the ADL—it was 30 percent. There've been many changes in terms of social acceptance, but there is an element of political anti-Semitism. One out of three Americans believes that American Jews are more loyal to Israel than to America. That's a very serious belief. In Europe, it's twice that much. And one out of two Europeans believes that the Jews control American foreign policy.

MS: Someone once accused us that all we do is count swastikas.

AF: Swastikas are number one—

MS: If they want to intimidate Jews. And if they want to intimidate blacks, they use a noose.

AF: Nooses are now number two. The nooses are in places of employment, interestingly enough—the overwhelming majority of nooses are found in places of employment.

MS: Swastikas still—people, they know what it means.

AF: The number one intimidating factor of hate. But they also use a swastika as a symbol of white supremacy, so it's



much broader. We've been accused of looking for them under the bed. I have come to the conclusion a long time ago, we don't have the luxury of being silent. And if I am to err, I would err to speak out against bigotry and anti-Semitism. [Foxman looks around the restaurant.] What's her name—from *60 Minutes*?

MS: Lesley Stahl. Sitting here?

AF: Yeah. Two tables down, see?

SR: So where does the professional passion come from? Your childhood?

AF: I guess so. I would say it's a combination of my upbringing, my experiences. I survived because of Christian love and Christian compassion—I survived hate because of tolerance.

SR: I know you and Mel Gibson exchanged letters about *The Passion of the Christ*—did you two ever meet?

AF: No. He made the issue, we didn't make the issue. He was the one who said, "I'm gonna make a movie that will tell the whole truth," and somebody said, "What if it offends the Jews?" He said, "I'm gonna tell the truth." For six months we tried to deal with him. Everybody said we made the movie popular—as if millions of Christians went to see it because *Abe Foxman* said something? Maybe ten thousand Jews went to see it because I said something. Mel Gibson was an icon. He was the most popular, the most successful, and look at him now. The bigotry came out and the American people basically pushed him aside—and that's what we're all about. Sure, you have the right to be a bigot, but our job is to make sure that the American people continue to find it un-American, immoral, un-Christian, and unacceptable, and that there is a consequence. The good news is, in this country there are consequences to people being bigots.

SR: Have you chosen a successor at ADL?

MS: Look, he's a vital young man.

AF: There was an Abe Foxman predecessor, and there will be an Abe Foxman successor. Before me, people said, "Oh my God, what's gonna be when Ben Epstein is gone?" When Arnold Forster's no longer here?" You know what? We're still here, we're doing the job—unfortunately, there's a greater need, so there'll be somebody else.

53%

of Muslim Americans say it has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the United States since September 11, 2001.

Source: Pew Research Center "Muslim Americans..."

888

hate groups are currently operating in the United States, an increase of 48% since 2000. Among them: 20 Ku Klux Klan chapters in Texas, 9 black separatist organizations in Georgia, 10 neo-Nazi groups in New Jersey, and 21 skin-head groups in California.

Source: Southern Poverty Law Center

41%

of Hispanics say that they, a family member, or a close friend has experienced discrimination within the past five years. In 2002, just 31% said the same thing.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center



THE STATE OF GETTING ALONG

BLACKS AND WHITES

Good news: 75% of white Americans say black-white relations are very or somewhat good—the highest percentage of whites to feel that way since 2001. Meanwhile, 25% of whites consider black-white relations very or somewhat bad—the lowest percentage of whites to think that since 2004.

Bad news: 55% of black Americans characterize black-white relations as very or somewhat good—the lowest percentage of blacks to feel that way since 2001. Conversely, 43% of blacks view black-white relations in a poor light—up from 28% in 2001.

CONSENSUS: Whites feel pretty good about relations between blacks and whites. Blacks don't.

BLACKS AND HISPANICS

Good news: N/A.

Bad news: 68% of black Americans and 59% of Hispanics say black-Hispanic relations are very or somewhat good (Considering that 74% of blacks and 69% of Hispanics felt that way in 2001, this is not encouraging.) Meanwhile, 29% of blacks and 38% of Hispanics characterize black-Hispanic relations as somewhat or very bad—a sharp rise in both camps since 2001.

CONSENSUS: Blacks are generally more positive than Hispanics in sizing up black-Hispanic relations, but perceptions of relations between the communities are at a low point.

WHITES AND HISPANICS

Good news: 68% of whites and 70% of Hispanics say white-Hispanic relations are very or somewhat good; 25% of whites and 28% of Hispanics see relations as bad. Those percentages have varied little since 2001.

Bad news: N/A.

CONSENSUS: Relationships between the two communities have remained stable and generally positive for seven years.

Source: Gallup

Cracking the Code

By MARK WARREN

Not long ago, down a shady road in one of the most exclusive college towns in America, the ten-millionth episode of racially coded speech sleepily played out. It happened in the very civilized precincts of central New Jersey, but it could have been anywhere. It started like this: An old man, who had for years farmed a piece of land on the edge of town, ended his life with a gun. After the shock came the question of what to do with his land, as he had no heirs. Up and down the lane, the households buzzed about what might happen: Would the land be subdivided and developed, or, as some people were saying, would it become a public park? It was finally decided that the old man's legacy should be a park, a beautiful park, with ball fields and soccer fields and hiking paths. And that's when things turned ugly. That's when things turned downright racial. But not overtly racial, as you can't just haul off and be overtly racial in the very civilized precincts of central New Jersey. Just as you can't

in most parts of the country anymore. Rather, things got euphemistically racial. Didn't the old man's executors realize that a public park tends to attract the public? Were they comfortable attracting the public to such a nice neighborhood? Before you knew it, they were told, "church groups from Trenton" would start showing up in the neighborhood to avail themselves of the beautiful park, and all would be lost. The executors didn't know how they were supposed to even respond to this last thing. It was kind of a head-scratcher: "Church groups from Trenton?" What are they really trying to say?

Well, black people, of course, with their picnics and their chicken bones and their watermelon rinds, that's what. What part of the racially coded phrase didn't they understand? I mean, it's not like the anxious neighbors could say, "But black people will come!" Because that would be offensive. And it would be wrong. And it is of utmost importance to code-speakers that they not be seen as immoral or unreasonable or, heaven forbid, racist, as they nonetheless work to achieve their objectives.

And so this landmark reenactment of the code came and went in this quiet corner of America, noticed by almost no one, as routine as the church bazaar. And that's how the code normally plays out. We have ugly things to say, we just don't want to be thought of as people who say ugly things.

And then there's politics, the necessity that

was the mother of the code's invention in the first place. And thus being a political year, it is worthy of note that the code's classic hits are in the political realm. There's the vaunted Southern Strategy of Nixon, he of "law and order" and "crime in the streets." There's Ronald Reagan's "welfare queen in her Cadillac." There's the photograph of a deranged black man named Willie Horton used by Republican knee-capper Lee Atwater against the especially defenseless Michael Dukakis in 1988, which is now recognized as the most ruthless and elegant deployment of the code in history.

Of course, you've got to be careful when administering the code visually, because there's a much higher probability that it'll backfire, and you'll be the one looking like a douchebag. Case in point: Earlier this year, the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton released a picture of Barack Obama, taken a couple of years ago when the senator was visiting Kenya. In the picture, Obama, who was gamely playing along by donning local garb, is wearing a turban and wrapped in a bed sheet over his khakis and polo shirt. Senator Clinton's people just put the picture out there, for our consideration, and

there it hung in the air, like a fart. They of course couldn't say, "Look, he really is a Muslim, and a foreigner, and lookee, he's so black!" So they said nothing, until the Obama campaign responded, essentially, What the hell? Whereupon Clinton's campaign manager attacked Senator Obama for being divisive. Awkward.

Here, a note of caution: It's important to know the difference between code and not-code, because a) some actual racists still don't feel the need to even bother with the niceties of coded speech, and b) obversely, it is entirely possible to believe that you've detected or been subject to the code when you haven't. The best recent example of this I-think-I-just-saw-a-racist case of erroneous code-spotting has to be the inexplicably listened-to Donna Brazile's assertion that Bill Clinton had been speaking in code when he said early this year that the narrative of Barack Obama's opposition to the war in Iraq was a "fairy tale" and then for good measure called Obama a "kid." At this, Brazile invoked her own race to claim special privilege to be offended: "As an African-American," she said, "I find his words and his tone to be very depressing." Now, it is obvious to any fair observer that Brazile imagined a racial slight where there was none, which is in itself pretty offensive. It is also obvious that if Brazile intends to continue slinging this kind of hash, she will need to learn—as will we all—the subtle but real differences between a coyly disguised racist and a mere gigantic asshole. ■

VOTERS AS BIGOTS

Americans say they would be less likely to support a candidate if he or she were:

Atheist: 61%

Muslim: 45%

Mormon: 25%

Evangelical Christian: 16%

Hispanic: 15%

A woman: 12%

Jewish: 11%

Catholic: 7%

Black: 6%

Source: Pew Research Center, "Clinton and Giuliani"



PARENTS AS BIGOTS

If their son or daughter started dating someone from a religious group different from their own, members of which of the following religions would cause Americans the most concern?

Muslim: 42%

Atheist/Realist/Humanist: 17%

Mormon: 14%

Protestant/other Christian group: 3%

Roman Catholic: 2%

Jewish: 1%

Source: Zogby

ABOUT THE SURVEYS Gallup's "Minority Rights and Relations" survey of 2,388 adults conducted June 4 to 24, 2007. • The Harris Poll, "Which Words Are Offensive?" conducted online between May 8 and 14, 2007, among 2,383 adults. • NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey of 700 registered voters on March 24 to 25, 2008. • Pew Hispanic Center, "2007 National Survey of Latinos: As Illegal Immigration Issue Heats Up, Hispanics Feel a Chill (Revised)," conducted by telephone from October 3 to November 9, 2007, among 2,003 Hispanic adults. • Pew Research Center, "Clinton and Giuliani Seen as Not Highly Religious, Romney's Religion Raises Concerns," based on telephone interviews conducted among 3,002 adults from August 1 to 18, 2007. • Pew Research Center, "Muslim Americans, Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," telephone survey of 1,050 adults conducted January 24 to April 30, 2007. • Pew Research Center, "Optimism About Black Progress Declines," telephone survey conducted from September 5 to October 6, 2007, among 3,086 adults. • Zogby International, "American Prejudice," based on a survey of 10,387 adults from June 22 to June 25, 2007.



Radha

WOMEN WE LOVE

Don't feel guilty about gawking at these photos of Aussie actress Radha Mitchell. She's picturing you naked, too.

BY MATTHEW BELLONI

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
CHLOE CRESPI



She sits, smiles, introduces herself politely, then

snatches the notes from my fingers, scanning the silly phrases I've highlighted in her press clips. *Icy Australian beauty fighting zombies of Silent Hill* (2006) "doesn't try to be sweet." *Explicit sex scenes in 'Feast of Love'* (2007) "An, a bit overprepared, are we?" she asks. The *ah* and *are* are barely distinguishable despite her ten years in L.A. She's giggling now and flipping forward to my handwritten scribbles: *Radha: goddess (Hindu?); 34; Vin Diesel—jerk? 'The Children of Huang Shi' (new movie—must ask!)* I snatch back. She's had her fun.

ESQ: Radha. Rani Amber Indigo Anunda Mitchell. How did that happen?

RM: My father couldn't decide which name to pick. My parents traveled in India. They were very impractical and romantic. Not me. I've always been very pragmatic. Now I've become very into my computer.

ESQ: Do you blog? It's okay if you do.

RM: I don't. I just like getting myself organized.

ESQ: That's very unactressy.

RM: It's so unactressy. I also ride my bike a lot. I have a snazzy bike. A real primo bike. It folds up, which is jazzy and kind of sexy.

ESQ: Speaking of, you don't seem to have a problem doing nude scenes.

RM: Nudity is totally fine. When you view it through the lens of a prudish, inhibited culture, then it becomes a little perverted. But the experience of acting is that you transcend your own experience.

ESQ: That makes no sense.

RM: All I'm saying is that when you act, you filter out how you feel in a situation. In *Feast of Love*, my character was totally comfortable being nude. But then I think about it afterward, and it's like, Well, that was a bit full-on. It's not something I would spend my time doing, unless it was a big feminist project.

ESQ: An all-nude feminist movie?

RM: That could be quite interesting. And if there's going to be a lot of nudity, it should be all different shapes.

ESQ: Please don't say you want to see everyone nude.

RM: I do! Have you ever been to Burning Man? You see all kinds of nude bodies there.

ESQ: And you don't want to look at 95 percent of them.

RM: Sure I do. Male nudity can be very glamorous. Male models, rock stars.

ESQ: But those guys look like women.

RM: I'm sitting here imagining you nude.

ESQ: That can't be pretty.

RM: Pale skinned. You haven't been in the sun lately, have you? I'm endowing you with an innocent childhood nudity.

ESQ: Um, how was shooting [*The Children of Huang Shi*, out May 23] in China?

RM: Did you know that in China babies don't wear diapers? The baby has a slit up the ass of its clothes, and you just spread its legs over a trash can and it pisses.

ESQ: How do the mothers know when?

RM: They're very sensitive and can hear

some sound. It was the middle of winter there, freezing cold, and there are these split-assed kids everywhere you go. They can just squat anywhere on the street.

ESQ: Are you following American politics? You like Obama?

RM: I can't say.

ESQ: You can. Actually. This isn't China.

RM: I've decided I'm going to be apolitical. We're beyond politics. Let's talk about love, not politics.

ESQ: You said you're a feminist. What does that mean?

RM: Equal opportunities for everyone on the planet. If women are going to prostitute themselves, men should as well. There should be more male hookers. And eighteen-year-old women should demand satisfaction from their men.

ESQ: You're probably impossible to make happy, am I right?

RM: Women no longer need to be in a relationship. You can pay for your own life, you can have children on your own, basically do whatever you want on your own. So if you're going to create an addition to your life, it should be about love. That makes me happy.

ESQ: What kind of guys are you into?

RM: It's not for your little tabloid to know.

ESQ: What? We don't care who you're dating.

RM: I'm not talking about it. Ultimately, what I seek to nurture is pure communication and love. Receptivity is divine. Receive what's happening in life and say yes to it. Like a big vagina. **18**



Is This Man a Monster?

The president asked John Yoo to define torture. He did it. Are Yoo's "torture memos" one of the most heinous mistakes in American history—or could he have been right?

HE IS THE YOUNG JUSTICE DEPARTMENT LAWYER—thirty-four at the time—who wrote the Bush administration's first decisions on prisoner detention, interrogation, habeas corpus, military commissions, and the Geneva Conventions. He is the man who defined torture as pain equivalent to "death or organ failure," who said that the president could crush the testicles of a child to make his father talk, who picked the lock on Pandora's box and unleashed the demons of Abu Ghraib. He's been accused of war crimes and compared to the Nazi lawyers who justified Hitler. Many good Americans would like to see him fired, shamed, even imprisoned. But in his classroom at Berkeley School of Law, John Yoo is a charming and patient teacher, popular with students and cordial to all. He's wearing an elegant blue suit offset by a shiny silver tie. His face is more like a shield than a face, expressionless and almost perfectly round, but his voice is relaxed and warm. At this moment, he's trying to get his students to define war. "So Judge Tatel says it's not so hard to say what a war is—casualties. What else?"

"Aircraft flying everywhere."

"There were no wars before Kitty Hawk?"

"Ships sailing around."

"So maybe the use of armed forces. But in the 1980s the U.S. bombed Libya. It lasted an hour, less than a hundred people were killed. Would that meet your standard for a war?"

No, the student says.

[By] JOHN H. RICHARDSON

For more on this story, and for the complete John Yoo interview go to esquire.com/john_yoo.



[Photograph by] DUSTIN AKSLAND

"How about use of troops? The U.S. sent troops to Somalia, primarily to reduce civilian casualties. Is that a war?"

"I don't think so."

The questions keep coming until the student hits overload.

"There are scholars who spend their lives studying this!"

Yoo chuckles. "Unfortunately including myself."

It seems grotesque, doesn't it? To sit in a comfortable classroom as the future lawyers of America clack away on their laptops, parsing definitions with the man whose legal mind turned America into a torturing nation?

Jose Padilla's lawyers certainly think so. "We are talking about the torture of an American citizen in an American prison by American officials," one of them told me, indignation rising fresh in his voice. Padilla is the former Chicago gang member who was arrested in O'Hare Airport in May 2002 as he returned from terrorist training camps in the Middle East with plans—or so the government believed—to explode a "dirty" nuclear bomb in the United States. After he was convicted on more general terrorism-conspiracy charges, his lawyers took the extraordinary step of filing a lawsuit against the junior-level lawyer they saw as the first link in the chain. "Defendant Yoo prepared the Torture Memos," they said, referring to several Justice Department opinions, including a memo that was signed on August 1, 2002, and withdrawn in shame two years later. "He knew the Torture Memos would be transmitted to senior government officials, including officials at the White House and Department of Defense, and would be relied upon by military and intelligence officers in formulating and implementing programs of confinement and interrogation for suspected 'enemy combatants.'" Yoo also wrote the memo that put the "enemy combatant" label on Padilla. As a result, the lawsuit claims, Padilla was held without charges for three years and eight months, completely alone under twenty-four-hour camera surveillance, with his windows blacked out and no clock or radio or TV to help him mark time. Sometimes the lights were left on for days, sometimes he was left in the dark for days, sometimes the cell was extremely hot, sometimes extremely cold. His sleep was constantly interrupted and he was threatened with death and given disorienting drugs and shackled and forced into stress positions for hours at a time. Whenever he was moved, he wore a blindfold and noise-canceling headphones to reinforce his isolation and helplessness. After a few years of this intentional effort to break his will and destroy his mind, Padilla was given to "involuntary twitching and self-inflicted scratch wounds" and his jailers often observed him weeping in his cell, so broken and passive that he had become "like a piece of furniture."

Padilla's claims have not been proven. Some of them, like the accusations of death threats and use of drugs, go beyond even Yoo's liberal interpretation of interrogation laws. But they remind us of what we have done and what we will continue to do. Consider the fight over Michael Mukasey's nomination for attorney general, when Mukasey refused to call waterboarding torture. He said he didn't want to put the CIA officers who made these judgments in the heat of battle "in personal legal jeopardy." It seemed so ridiculous, right out of 1984. The Khmer Rouge used waterboarding. We prosecuted Japanese generals for doing it. But Mukasey was confirmed anyway, and four months later President Bush vetoed a law that banned waterboarding. Consider also that courts and Congress have endorsed many of Yoo's opinions, including the use of military commissions and the extended detention without criminal charges of "enemy combatants" who are American citizens.

And consider this—we still can't even agree on the basic question that Yoo is asking his law class today, which turns out to be not a quibble or a technicality but the very first question that landed on his desk on the afternoon of September 11, 2001.

Is this a war? How can the president respond? Can he use the Army? Will he need congressional approval? *Is this a war?*

"It's like pornography," one student says. "You know it when you see it."

It's just semantics, says another. "When there's something as powerful as war, we don't want the president to just go ahead."

But why not? Yoo asks.

"Because we like checks and balances and we like the Constitution?"

"So you're worried about one person making mistakes. War is so dangerous, the stakes are so high, you wouldn't want one person making that decision?"

"That's why it's so important to have checks and balances," the student agrees. "Otherwise the president could run wild. Like we have today, with the powers of an unchecked president—I call that running wild."

"So you're worried about errors," Yoo answers, perfectly calm. "That's certainly the case with Iraq. We overestimated the benefits and underestimated the costs."

But now the hour is up and the students gather their papers—and Yoo still keeps shooting out last-minute questions. "Is the president really prone to error more than the other branches? Isn't that also true of Congress? If you require Congress to give preapproval for every conflict, what is the cost? Why didn't Truman ask for a declaration of war in Korea, even though Congress would have given him one?"

These are hard questions. Most of us shrug them off and judge Yoo and Bush through the lens of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo. But Yoo didn't shrug them off. He put them at the center of his thinking. As a consequence, he is being hauled before Congress in May and will be forever defined by the abuses of the Bush administration.

From his office, he has a million-dollar view of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. There are law books everywhere. His screen saver is a picture of his wife. His iPhone screen saver is a picture of his wife too, which helps take the edge off all the hate calls. On the floor, there's a shopping bag from a local hippie institution called Amoeba Music.

On the wall, a framed goodbye card from the Department of Justice. "Thank you for your excellent service to America," John Ashcroft wrote. "We are stronger and safer because of you."

He turns out to have lots of unexpected quirks. He's pro-choice. He thinks flag burning is a legitimate form of free speech. He thinks the government is "wasting a lot of resources" in the war on drugs. He thinks the phrase "war on terror" is misleading political rhetoric. He's cowriting an article that makes a conservative case for gay marriage. "Our argument is, the state should just stay out of these things, because it doesn't hurt anybody." And he's definitely alarmed by the more theocratic Republicans. "When Mike Huckabee says he wants to amend the Constitution so that it's consistent with God's law, that scares the bejesus out of me."

We go for a stroll down Telegraph Avenue, and he's a bit disappointed there aren't more tie-dyed renegades. "Usually this

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[I]t must inflict pain that is difficult to endure. Physical pain amounting to torture must be equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death. For purely mental pain or suffering to amount to torture under Section 2340, it must result in significant psychological harm of significant duration, e.g., lasting for months or even years.

¹ This narrow definition of illegal torture became the most notorious passage from the "torture memo" authored by Yoo, signed on August 1, 2002, by Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee, and approved by John Ashcroft.

is the land time forgot."

"Do you often come here to mock the hippies?"

"I don't come here specifically for that. I try to multitask."

The hippies might be worn out from protesting, he says. Two weeks ago, the Berkeley City Council called the local Marine recruiters "unwelcome intruders" and it turned into a huge controversy, with Republicans threatening to cut millions in city funds and thousands of protesters massing outside City Hall with signs that said WATERBOARDING IS TORTURE AND TAKE A STAND AGAINST TORTURE. "I think the city was nuts," Yoo says. "You can be against the war, but to be against the armed forces? It's crazy."

"People aren't always as coherent as you'd like them to be."

"It shows you what a strange place this is."

"Or how unpopular the war is."

"It's the level of anger that really shocks me," he says.

"I'm surprised that you're surprised," I say.

The anger is often directed at him. Protesters in Guantánamo orange have disrupted his class and dogged him in public forums. I talked to another Berkeley law professor who refuses to attend faculty meetings with him. "Until he atones," he said, "I don't want to be in the same room with him." But Yoo shrugs it all off. He likes living among liberals, he says. "Liberals from the sixties do a great job of creating all the comforts of life—gourmet food, specialty jams, the best environmentally conscious waters."

We stop in at Amoeba Music and he cruises the sci-fi shelves—he's a fan of *Ghost in the Shell*, the anime that inspired *The Matrix*. Usually he buys classical music, but his taste in pop runs to anthemic bands like the Who and U2. "Nothing too esoteric. I don't have any fancy tastes in pop music."

He seems very pleased that the entire record store smells like marijuana. "That's what Berkeley smells like!"

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then it let people in. It was extraordinarily generous. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the generosity of the United States."

He grew up in the elite Main Line area of Philadelphia and

went to a prep school where he wore a suit and tie and learned Greek and Latin. He seems to have been a natural-born conservative, attracted even as a teenager to Ronald Reagan's message of anticommunism, low taxes, and small government, values that resonated with the immigrant dream of personal freedom. But he was never angry or righteous about it. "He was completely open and tolerant of everyone," says Gordon Getter, a prep-school classmate. "He had a genuine sense of humor," says Thomas Schwartz, one of his professors at Harvard. "He would argue and people would get mad at him, but he never seemed to take it personally."

He was also exceptionally brilliant, Schwartz says. "These were extraordinary students, and John was a star among them."

As an undergraduate in the history department, Yoo developed a deep interest in presidential power. His senior thesis was about Eisenhower's plan to share nuclear weapons with the other members of NATO. The example of Truman in Korea was never far from his mind—with North Korean troops sweeping south, Truman rushed U.S. troops to war without pausing for a congressional debate and tried to seize the steel companies to guarantee arms production.

But when Yoo arrived at Yale Law School, everyone seemed to agree that Congress was the dominant policymaker and should approve every war. It was the standard liberal position in the wake of Vietnam, but Yoo saw Vietnam through the lens of Korea, imagining how life would have been for his parents under the savage dictatorship of Kim Il Sung. His preference for Truman's lonely fortitude only deepened when he became a clerk for Laurence Silberman, one of the leading champions of the "unitary executive" theory of expansive presidential powers. In free moments around the courthouse, Silberman painted Congress as a flock of tiny men with tiny ropes intent on binding the president down—annoying in peace but dangerous in war.

Over the next few years, Yoo alternated between stints as a professor at Berkeley and jobs in Washington, first with Justice Clarence Thomas and next with Senator Orrin Hatch. Though he disagreed with them on basic issues like abortion and the attempt to remove Clinton from office, he was drawn to their lonely integrity. Hatch was "one of the few guys in the Senate who really would go to the mat on principle," he says. He also picked up another crucial lesson during the Whitewater investigation, when Senate committee members would demand documents and President Clinton refused to provide them, each side insisting that the Constitution supported its position. "But they worked out deals," Yoo says. "The system is almost designed

for them to come into conflict, and they work out a deal. So that had a big effect on me."

Back at Berkeley, he started putting it all into a book. As the first chapters hit the legal journals, he became a star on the lecture circuit, a young hotshot with a provocative theory. His basic idea was that the Constitution has tons of rules on how to pass legislation but almost nothing on war. So the president takes action and Congress fights back, an improvisation with one partner leading, and that is the way it was meant to be—the real reason Truman didn't ask Congress for an authorization before going into Korea, the reason Clinton continued to bomb the Serbs in defiance of the War Powers Act, the reason Bush has resisted every attempt by Congress to restrict his war policies.

Yoo's analysis hinges on the Declare War Clause. Most scholars—most people—believe it was intended to give Congress power to decide whether to go to war and that the founders saw this as an essential bulwark against tyranny. Yoo makes a case that it was really meant as a formal recognition of wars already under way, and the founders intended the real bulwark against tyranny to be Congress's power of the purse. "Several times every year, Congress has a chance to vote on funding the Iraq war," he keeps telling me. "It's an amazing power—if 51 percent of them refuse to vote for it, the war is over."

Abraham Lincoln is Yoo's best argument. Congress had already passed a statute laying out an explicit legal procedure for freeing slaves, but Lincoln ignored the law and freed the slaves under his "unilateral executive authority in wartime as commander in chief to take measures necessary to win a war," as Yoo puts it. Lincoln used the same grounds to suspend habeas corpus, a right the Constitution explicitly grants to Congress. If you really believe that Yoo is all wrong and the unitary executive theory completely false, you kind of have to say Lincoln behaved like a tyrant.

Jonathan Freiman, Jose Padilla's attorney, bristles when I run Yoo's arguments down for him. "The Supreme Court has said every time it's been asked since 9/11, a state of war is not a blank check. The Constitution applies."

But Congress and the Supreme Court also accepted the military commissions and the enemy-combatant designation and even the indefinite detention of an American citizen named Yaser Hamdi, Yoo would say.

Freiman concedes the point. But Hamdi was arrested in a foreign country in the zone of combat, he says. "That's a pretty small category, a battlefield in a foreign country. It's not a category that encompasses Padilla."

But that's exactly the problem. Padilla was arrested a few months after his associates killed three thousand people in New York City. So where is this battlefield?

It's a dangerous question, Freiman says. "The argument that the entire United States has become a battlefield by virtue of those heinous attacks on 9/11 is just an argument to make the Constitution completely optional, an argument to extend presidential power to the level of monarchy—to every inch of life in this country."

For the next two hours, he pounds Yoo from every possible angle. They already had Padilla under arrest and could have held him under charges like conspiracy or levying war. But they

wanted to interrogate him and they wanted to use harsh methods, so they just made up their own rules. This was the natural result of rejecting the Geneva Conventions instead of treating Al Qaeda members as ordinary war criminals. "Before 9/11, you're either a criminal or a soldier. What the government said was, We want a third category where the black shade is drawn, where there are no protections whatsoever, where there is no law."

Freiman is particularly passionate when he rips into the torture memo itself. Did I know that the Justice Department was now investigating how it ever came to be written? Did I know that the man who took over Yoo's department withdrew it, calling it "deeply flawed, sloppily reasoned, overbroad, and incautious in asserting extraordinary constitutional authorities on behalf of the president?" What Yoo *should* have done was look at the Eighth Amendment, which forbids cruel and unusual punishment. He should have considered international treaties against torture and cruelty and civil rights along with a host of domestic laws and statutes. But Yoo wasn't acting as an honest lawyer, he says. As the Padilla lawsuit states, he was "a key member of a small, secretive group of executive officials who exerted tremendous influence over antiterrorism policy and who were known as the 'War Council'." So he bent the law to justify a course of action he was already determined to take.

Freiman is especially scornful about the "necessity argument," as legal philosophers call it—the idea that the president can take extraordinary actions in an emergency to protect the nation, that the information in Padilla's head was worth cracking it open. "That's the argument that every despotic regime in every corner of the globe has been making for sixty years," he says. "Necessity, national security. The Nazis invoked necessity too. The question is, How do you deal with those threats? Are you bound by human rights, or are you not?"

This is why Freiman filed Padilla's lawsuit against Yoo. To redraw that line, he says, to recover our sense of justice and decency, to salvage the idealism that once shone so bright, America must pass judgment on John Yoo.

So let's go back to that moment in the heat of battle. The way Yoo tells the story, he was sitting at his desk at the Justice Department when the first plane hit the World Trade Center. He had only been working there two months, hired to answer the White House's questions on foreign policy laws at a time when the biggest legal issue before him was a treaty about polar bears. When the order came to evacuate Washington and people began heading out into the streets, someone from the attorney general's office told him to stick around.

Soon the questions came:
Is this a war?
Do we need to declare war?
Can we scramble planes?
And again: *Is this a war?*

There was no obvious precedent. Yoo considered the level of violence and the source, thousands of civilians killed in coordinated attacks by a foreign enemy intent on crippling our government. He considered the Civil War, when people asked if it was a war or a rebellion and if Southerners should be treated as traitors or members of a foreign nation. He considered our history of warfare against nonstate groups like Indians and pirates.

He considered the level of military response that might be likely, because a military response itself would imply a state of war. He may have considered his friend Barbara Olson, dead on one of the planes. He found himself returning to this thought:

If a nation had done it, would we have any doubt it was a war?

So yes, it was a war. That's the decision he made while the buildings were still burning.

He stayed till two or three in the morning and when he left Justice and crossed the Fourteenth Street Bridge, the Pentagon was still burning. He saw the flames reaching up so high they lit the sky. But he didn't sleep because his phone kept ringing, each call another variation on the theme. Can we use force? What standards would guide the use of force? *Is this a war?*

Everyone reviewed his war memo. Ashcroft signed off. And Congress passed the Authorization to Use Military Force with only one opposing vote. If this was the first mistake in the war on terror, as many now believe, it was a mistake the nation made together.

The decision on military commissions came next and seemed like a no-brainer, Yoo says. We had always used military commissions in wartime because they were less cumbersome and many civilian laws (like stalking and assault) made no sense in a war context. It also seemed like a good idea to keep the prison camps distant from U.S. soil, both for safety and to insulate them from those same domestic laws.

The Geneva Conventions issue came up in December 2001. In retrospect it may seem obvious that any departure from Geneva was a policy mistake, the first step down the slippery slope, but Yoo points out that President Reagan explicitly refused to extend Geneva rights to terrorists in 1987. There were also technical problems, such as Geneva requirements that POWs be held in barracks instead of prisons, which didn't seem a practical approach to enemies who didn't wear uniforms and deliberately killed civilians, war criminals by definition. The Taliban was a tougher issue because Afghanistan had something closer to regular-army units and had signed the Geneva Conventions, but Yoo argued that Afghanistan was a failed state, so its signature didn't mean anything—which even he admits was pushing it. The point was, they weren't massing orderly brigades to attack the United States. They gave safe haven to terrorists. With Colin Powell pushing back, Bush finally decided to deny Geneva rights to Al Qaeda but to extend them to the Taliban—a necessary improvisation, Yoo says, a recognition that something new had entered the world.

The interrogation question came up only briefly, Yoo insists. In one meeting he attended in the White House Situation Room,

someone worried that under Geneva, "we would only be able to ask Osama bin Laden loud questions, and nothing more." But this was all just an academic exercise until late March 2002, when the CIA captured Al Qaeda's chief of operations, a man named Abu Zubaydah. They approached Yoo and said they had solid reasons to believe that Zubaydah knew the names of hundreds of terrorists and the details of attack plans that could include nuclear weapons. On top of that, Zubaydah was an expert in interrogation and how to resist interrogation. If it wasn't exactly the famous "ticking bomb" scenario come to life, where you are certain there is a bomb and certain your captive knows where it is, it was close enough. Yoo insists that nobody ever proposed crossing the line into outright torture and that he personally considers torture repugnant and unjustified under any conditions. But they did believe that this was a strange new kind of war, where the front lines were inside the heads of men like Padilla and Abu Zubaydah. So, what about things like isolation, prolonged interrogation, forced exercise, and limited sleep? Where was the line, exactly?

"How long did it take to come up with an answer?"

"I don't remember."

"Weeks? Months?"

"Probably weeks."

The Eighth Amendment did not apply, Yoo decided. It forbade cruel and unusual punishment, but punishment came only after a criminal conviction. His critics savage him for not considering American laws against coerced confessions and police brutality, but Yoo points out that the memo only applies to noncitizens "outside the United States." They say he should have considered our treaty obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which also forbids "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment," but Yoo believed that treaties were only binding when Congress passed statutes translating them into domestic law, a position recently affirmed by the Supreme Court. That meant the binding law was the antitorture statute Congress passed in 1994 in the wake of the convention, a statute that forbade "severe" physical pain and "prolonged mental harm." So these were the critical questions:

How do you define "severe pain"? How do you define "prolonged mental harm"?

Some say this is where he should have balked. "Torture violates the very premise of the legal system itself, that there is something irreducible and inviolable about every person," says Yoo's fellow Berkeley law professor [continued on page 150]

II

[T]he mental strain experienced by an individual during a lengthy and intense interrogation... would not violate Section 2340(2). On the other hand, the development of a mental disorder such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which can last months or even years, or even chronic depression, which also can last for a considerable period of time if untreated, might satisfy the prolonged harm requirement.

² A lesser-known passage from Yoo's memo that allows that harm to the mental health of the prisoner might constitute torture. This passage seems to presage the Jose Padilla case, in which Yoo is a defendant.

Gore Vidal

Iconoclast, 82, Hollywood

Interviewed by Mike Sager Photograph by Chris McPherson

- > **Somebody was here** the other day from BBC Radio. It's odd to meet a rather elderly man who says, "I've been reading you all my life." It makes you feel a slight chill.
- > **God has been expelled.** I think he knows when he's on a losing wicket.
- > **I went into a line** of work in which jealousy is the principle emotion between practitioners. I don't think I ever suffered from it, because there was no need. But I was aware of it in others, and I found it a regrettable fault.
- > **There was more** of a flow to my output of writing in the past, certainly. Having no contemporaries left means you cannot say, "Well, so-and-so will like this," which you do when you're younger. You realize there is no so-and-so anymore. You are your own so-and-so. There is a bleak side to it.
- > **You hear** all this whining going on, "Where are our great writers?" The thing I might feel doleful about is, Where are the readers?
- > **Everything's wrong** on Wikipedia.
- > **My general response** to boarding school was; anything to get away from that fucking mother of mine. She was a monster.
- > **Some of my father's** fellow West Pointers once asked him why I turned out so well, his secret in raising me. And he said, "I never gave him any advice, and he never asked for any." We agreed on nothing, but we never quarreled once.
- > **Every fool** I knew had gone to university. I didn't think it necessary. I'd seen some of the results, you know?
- > **When I was young,** I was bored shitless with being desired by others. I don't look in the mirror anymore.
- > **I lived with Howard** for fifty years, but what we had was certainly not romantic love, not passionate love. And it certainly was nonsexual. Try and explain that to the fags.
- > **Nonprofit status** is what created the Bible Belt. The tax code brought religion back to this country.
- > **At a certain age,** you have to live near good medical care—if, that is, you're going to continue. You always have the option of not continuing, which, I fear, is sometimes nobler.
- > **There are some joys** in the higher hypochondria.
- > **When you** get a hereditary disease, you realize you're part of the main. No matter how much you may have tried to be your own man, you're going to be like your parents.
- > **I've developed** a total loathing for McCain, conceited little asshole. And he thinks he's wonderful. I mean, you can just tell, this little simper of self-love that he does all the time. You just want to kick him.
- > **Patriotism** is as sickening today as it has ever been. I was watching the news before you came and there was a lot of coverage of Kosovo and the problems there. They showed footage of people burning an American flag. And the newscaster got all broken up and teary-eyed. He says, "I guess [sob] I just feel something here, folks, when I see the American flag being burned." And I said, You fucking asshole. Whatever happened to the news?
- > **When she was running for the Senate,** Hillary's psephologists discovered that the one group that really hated her was white, middle-aged men of property. She got the whole thing immediately—I heard she said, "I remind them of their first wife."
- > **"You got to meet everyone"**—Jackie Kennedy, William Burroughs. People always put that sentence the wrong way around. I mean, why not put it the true way, that these people got to meet me, and wanted to? Otherwise it sounds like I spent my life hustling around trying to meet people. "Oh, look, there's the governor."
- > **I met** a lot of people, but I didn't get to know them.
- > **People in my situation** get to read about themselves whether they want to or not. It's generally wrong. Or oversimplified—which is sometimes useful.
- > **For a writer,** memory is everything. But then you have to test it; how good is it, really? Whether it's wrong or not, I'm beyond caring. It is what it is. As Norman Mailer would say, "It's existential." He went to his grave without knowing what that word meant.
- > **I was** the meanest kid on the block.
- > **We're the most captive nation** of slaves that ever came along. The moral timidity of the average American is quite noticeable. Everybody's afraid to be thought in any way different from everyone else.
- > **Get rid of religion.** It'll do you no good.
- > **As the Greeks sensibly believed,** should you get to know yourself, you will have penetrated as much of the human mystery as anyone need ever know.
- > **I wasn't like everyone,** you know. What everyone did, I was sure not to do. ■





THIRTEEN ATHLETES SHOW OFF THEIR GAME

**GOKUL
CHAKRAVARTHY**
BIG-SWINGING
CRICKETER

Chakravarthy is a professional cricketer who plays for the Indian national team. He is known for his powerful batting style and has scored many centuries in international cricket.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY
TOM FOWLKS

AND PUT A NEW SPIN ON SUMMER SPORTSWEAR

JOSE LUIS MENDIZABAL
JAI-ALAI LIFER

About his sport: It's a lot like racquetball, except in jai alai, players compete in a three-walled court and use a long-wicker glove to catch and throw a hard ball against the court's front wall. For more information, visit jai-alai.info.

About the athlete: Mendizabal played jai alai professionally for almost three decades. "I've played every sport in the world, and this is the fastest. The ball goes 160 miles per hour, and if it hits you without a helmet, it can kill you."



COLUMBIA CRICKET CLUB URBAN BALLERS

From left, on Michael Rao: Linen-and-cotton polo shirt (\$85) by Pure DKNY; jeans (\$200) by Diesel; steel Luminor Merina Automatic watch with leather strap (\$5,900) by Panerai. On Brendan Grahame: Cotton sweater (\$395) by Zegna Sport; cotton henley (\$195) by Z Zegna; cotton-and-nylon trousers (\$495) by Prada. On Gokul Chakraverty: Cotton-and-cashmere cricket vest (\$298) and cotton-and-linen polo shirt (\$90) by Ralph Lauren; cotton trousers (\$235) by Canali. On Dileep Varma: Cotton piqué polo shirt (\$65) by DKNY; cotton trousers (\$119) by Brooks Brothers. On Suraj Chauhan: Cotton sweater (\$520) by Salvatore Ferragamo.

**STEVE MASSIAH
A VERY SERIOUS
CRICKET PLAYER**

Steve Massiah is a professional cricketer who plays for the West Indies. He is a left-handed batsman and a right-arm fast bowler. He has played international cricket for the West Indies since 1998. He is currently playing for the West Indies in the 2015 Cricket World Cup. He is a very serious player and is known for his aggressive batting and fast bowling. He is a very talented player and is one of the best players in the world. He is a very serious player and is known for his aggressive batting and fast bowling. He is a very talented player and is one of the best players in the world.

**DUNCAN PEARSON
COURT-TENNIS ACE**

About his sport: Court tennis is similar to regular tennis, except a racketed-in court is divided in half by a stick net, and most every surface (including the walls) is in-bounds. The players use small rackets to hit heavy balls to each other, with 15-30-40 scoring and a one-bounce rule in effect. For more information visit www.courttennis.org.

About the athlete: Pearson competes at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia, one of just nine court tennis facilities in America. "The first time a guy cranked a ball at me, I thought, 'It looks just like a tennis ball, it won't hurt.' It hurt like hell."



This page: Two-button wool-and-silk suit (\$1,925) and cotton piqué polo shirt (\$775) by Dolce & Gabbana. Opposite: Cotton jacket (\$1,275) by Calvin Klein. Collection: cotton shirt (\$78) by Calvin Klein.

**SERGEY ISAYENKO
AND DARYL
HOMER
SABER SLASHERS**

About their sport: Unlike épée fencers (who can use only the point of their sword to stab their opponent), saber fencers score points by slashing their opponent's body with their entire blade. One touch equals one point, and the first fencer with five touches (or sometimes three) wins. For more info, see [page 141](#).

Isayenko, 28, is a two-time Olympic champion in the men's individual and team sabre events. Homer, 34, is a four-time Olympic champion in the men's individual and team sabre events. Both athletes are currently training at the U.S. Fencing Center in Lake Placid, New York.



**TIM MOREHOUSE
AND SEAN
BUCKLEY
MORE MEN
WITH SABERS**

Three-piece suit: three-piece
suits: and wax jacket (\$795)
by Emporio Armani; cotton
jacket (\$125) by Boss Black;
two-button linen-and-cotton
jacket (\$795) by Versace;
collection: nylon-and-wax
jacket (\$795) by Calvin Klein;
collection: cotton shirt (\$50)
by Louis Vuitton

**T.J. DALTON
SAILING RACER**

About his sport: Sailors must use physical strength, experience, and guile in equal measure to outpace their competitors in a match race. They can maintain their lead by blocking competitors' wind, suddenly changing tack, or reaching for the fringe of a course to find better wind. For more information, visit ussailing.org.

About the athlete: For Dalton, a member of the Manhattan Sailing Club, competitive sailing is as bruising as any contact sport. "Somebody's always bleeding or all banged up. Stuff bangs around, you know?"

Three-button cotton-and-linen jacket (\$995) by Ermenegildo Zegna; cotton shirt (\$90) by Brooks Brothers; silk tie (\$165) by Ralph Lauren Purple Label; cotton trousers (\$78) by Calvin Klein; steel Timewalker Chrono Automatic watch with alligator strap (\$3,590) by Montblanc Meisterstück

n ght stand

PELHAM CAME AWAKE one night to find a naked man standing over his bed, growling. There was little light in the bedroom, but he could see one of the man's arms, from shoulder to wrist, a grim tattoo of something burning, a pale suggestion of bared teeth and taut lips. The growling was menacing and confused, with shrill rises, deep ferocity giving way to brief keening trills, a mangle of tones. Jill woke, too, looked at the man, then rolled from bed and fled screaming toward the next room. Pelham reached for the light on the nightstand, but his fingers rattled a plate that shouldn't have been there, and on the plate there lay a knife. The man stood still at the bottom of the bed, noisy and tall, a looming shadow inside the house that Pelham had to stand and fight, do what he could, stall for time and let Jill run hide somewhere, since she must be what he's after—why else would he be naked? But the man made no move to chase her and didn't lunge or leap onto Pelham like he could've, either, taken control and clobbered him senseless, but only stood there growling with his arms at his sides, hands held low, and Pelham quick got to him with the blade, planted steel in his chest. A popping sound came from inside the man's ribs, and Pelham expected to be sliced in return now, maybe shot, but the man missed somehow, so close but he missed, and Pelham whipped in another stab and there came that *ponk* sound of striking a knothole hammering a nail, and the blade hung up in the ribs. The growls were weaker and calmer as Pelham twisted the blade, weaker and calmer, then the man's arms collapsed onto Pelham, damp hands clasp-

By DANIEL WOODBELL

shoulders as if to steady him, hold him upright, prevent him from falling, and blood jumped from the chest wound, ran warm down Pelham's belly. The ribs let the knife loose all of a sudden, and the overhead light flicked on as Pelham arched the blade and saw the man in a bright clear flash, a big handsome kid, shaved head, too many tats, his chest hole leaking breath and bubbling blood, but his hand didn't halt. The kid's neck burst open beneath his chin, Jill screamed again, hot-flung blood in the eyes blinded Pelham as the kid's arms squeezed about him, hugged him near, hugged him as they both fell to the floor and fell apart.

Blind yet, eyeballs rolling in the warm pudding, Pelham groped for a bedsheet. The kid's bare feet were slapping the wood floor, slapping down hard like he was clambering to the crest of a hill that wasn't there. Pelham blotted the blood from his eyes. Jill was weeping. The kid soon stilled, blue eyes open, footprints in red all around his body. The wind inside him escaped from ass and mouth. He never had said a word.

For weeks to come Pelham would wonder how that knife came to be on the nightstand. How did a knife that shouldn't have been there happen to be there on this particular night? He tried to recall the preceding days, backward from the killing moment, to unravel the hours and find that knife. He didn't eat before sleep anymore—acid reflux—so it wasn't there to carve apples or slice cheese. They'd had guests a couple of nights ago, though, a few friends in for an evening of bourbon and smoked turkey, and he'd gone to bed pretty well lit—had he craved a snack to soak up the sour mash, fuck the reflux, and fallen asleep before fetching any? There was no sign of food on the empty plate. They'd gone after trout on the Spring River the day before that, fog in the bottoms and rainbows filling their creels—maybe he'd meant to fix something rent in the gear? Cut a tangle loose, trim a fly, fix a net, or perform some other mysterious household task he simply could not recall.

REQUIRE FICTION

"Look under the bed, maybe."

"You know, he shit on your leather chair downstairs."

The leather recliner was Pelham's inheritance, his own father's most cherished possession, and the shit was loose spatter and spread over the seat, one armrest. Two days later Pelham gave up trying to clean the leather, cleaned it enough to forget the spatter, and dragged the chair to the curb for the trash haulers to collect. Before nightfall he'd watched from the window as a man and two children pulled to the curb, checked the leather chair over, then excitedly jammed it into the trunk of their car and hurried away grinning with the trunk lid bouncing. That was the first time, leaning against the window, watching his father's chair disappear, that Pelham caught himself speaking aloud to empty rooms. "And fuck you for making me kill you."

The cop said, "We found it outside, around the corner of the house, beside that big shrub. An ol' single-action pistol. His clothes were there, piled nice, really, and the pistol was underneath. A pocketknife, too. His wallet's got military ID in it, says his name is Randall Davies—know him?"

"I went to school with a guy named that."

"Well, this one was a junior."

THE FIRST TIME PELHAM heard himself threatened was early that evening, in a convenience store where he and Jill went to buy more cleaning supplies. The bedroom floor was hardwood, and the biggest puddle left an outline of blood that had settled into the grain like a birthmark and wouldn't come off easily. There was only one other customer, a man in a green shirt with his name sewn above the heart pocket, and he

Sometimes a man will dream about a moment like this, an opportunity for sanctified violence, a time to open the cage and allow the thing sleeping inside out to eat its fill.

The house became crowded with cops. Pelham lived amidst woods and pastures, but the city limits had recently expanded to make him a West Table resident, so there were town cops in uniform and out clomping about, huddling to look down at the kid, studying the mess across the floor. Pelham sat on the bed with Jill beside him. He'd shook and shuddered for a while, waiting on the cops, trying not to look at the wounds, the open eyes and footprints, but having a surprise feelingsneak up on him, a creepy congratulatory glee, an animal gloat—Hey, I was attacked by a nameless intruder, fight to the finish, my foe now lies slain, a righteous kill. Sometimes a man will dream about a moment like this, an opportunity for sanctified violence, a time to open the cage and allow the thing sleeping inside out to eat its fill. A cop in a plaid shirt and Cardinals cap said, "Where'd his weapon fall to?"

"It was dark."

"What'd he have?"

Daniel Woodrell writes about the clannish families, broken men, petty thieves, and dopeheads that populate much of the Missouri Ozarks, where his family has had roots since before the Civil War. A high school dropout turned marine turned Iowa Writer's Workshop graduate, Woodrell lives in West Plains, Missouri, and has written eight novels, most recently Winter's Bone.

was whispering with the clerk. Pelham and Jill came to stand behind him, holding scouring powder and Murphy soap and scrub pads. They heard the words "killed, stabbed like a hog in autumn" and knew they were under discussion. They remained silent, didn't say a word, waited for the man to leave. As he left, the man spoke more loudly, "I been friends with that boy all his life, and if the law don't do right to the son of a bitch, I know who will." Jill started crying again on the way home, and when he pulled into the driveway, she said, "Maybe that last stab could've been skipped, hon. The neck one."

He was called to the police station the next morning. The sky was rumbling, stuffed with dark clouds, but only a thin sheen fell, raising oil slicks on the streets, shining the grass. The cops were named Olmstead and Johnson and led him to a private office. The room was painted a neutral sort of white, like the room could hold no opinions about anything one way or the other, and there was a tape recorder on the table. Olmstead said, "You're certain sure you never did know him?"

"I could've seen him somewhere, but I don't recall it."

"His daddy knows who you are."

"From school days."

"And Jill, now, it couldn't be she'd got acquainted with such a handsome young fella somewhere, could it?"

"He was kinda young, man, but thanks a shitload for putting that thought in my head."

"So she might've?"

"Fuck you."

PELHAM HAD KILLED BEFORE. He'd been on Okinawa, waiting to turn eighteen, a lance corporal, and the day after his birthday made him eligible for combat he was herded onto a fat airplane and taken to Saigon. He didn't know what was going on when he landed in Vietnam and didn't when he left, either. Jarheads hanging around a gedunk, waiting for assignment, and a corporal told them they were lucky men, they were going to someplace in the south where there wasn't much action to worry about. Everybody relaxed, tried to eat noodle soup with odd spoons they couldn't make work, and wrote postcards home expressing relief or disappointment. The radio started crackling about noon, and more and more senior men gathered to listen as the next hour passed. Suddenly the corporal said they weren't

going where he'd thought, get on your feet. First chopper ride, a little airsick, flying north to a place under attack, a place with a name Pelham never did hear straight. They took fire coming in and two marines were hit and spread on the bulkhead. Pelham had blood on his face before he'd even landed at this place with a name he didn't know. A harried captain acknowledged the fresh arrivals with an irritated wave and a sergeant sent the Fucking New Guys downhill to the foxholes nearest the wire. Rainwater deepened in the holes, drizzle never stopped. The hills were steep and richly green, fog was alive and lowering until dark. There was a sniper everybody kept yelling about. Pelham did not know where he'd been sent or who he was with. The only name he'd caught was of a marine who'd died on the way in, Lazzaro from Texas. He did not have a clear idea about the shape or size of the base. He was mightily afraid he might shoot the wrong target in the dark, but he didn't want to be hesitant. He didn't know which way to run if it came to that or whose name to scream seeking help. Enemy troops breached the wire

twice that night. Mortar rounds made the mud fly. Pelham shot and shot and shot every shadow that came near or seemed like it might. When he next understood where he was, he lay in a white bed on a hospital ship with a humming in his head that didn't fade until he was home again. Sometime during his recovery he received the Bronze Star as a parting gift.

He'd served in Vietnam less than twenty-four hours and felt uncomfortable even mentioning that he'd been there, since other veterans always asked, Remember Mama something-or-other's joint on the road to Marble Mountain? Di di mau? Beans and motherfuckers? The way the gals in black pajamas'd yank one leg up high and pee out the side? No, no, no, no. You're a bullshitter, then, because if you were there, Jody, you'd know them things. A year after his return Pelham ceased to mention Vietnam to new acquaintances, dropped it from the biography of himself he'd give if asked. Only those who knew him before he went were certain that he'd gone. Jill was a second wife, fifteen years his junior, a lovely, patient blond, and remembered Vietnam as a tiresome old television show that'd finally been canceled about the time she left third grade. She touched Pelham's scars but didn't ask for details.

THAT WEATHER, that look, a forest in fog, a faint drizzle and no sky, always took him back to his foxhole in a place he couldn't name. Such weather often lay over the mountain rivers where he and Jill went fishing, and the next time they went, the sky spread low and gray over the bottoms and he could smell foreign mud and old fear. Jill stood knee-deep in the flow, facing upstream from Pelham all morning, silent and tense, then finally turned downstream and said, "No. No, I never did."

For two days they received threats by telephone, and Pelham would listen to the harsh plans for his body parts and sorry

"He never even threw a punch."

When Pelham cursed aloud in empty rooms, he knew he was talking to the marine he'd killed. He thought of him as Junior and interrogated him in his mind, sometimes shook or slapped him. How'd you happen to pick my door? This road is not the route to anywhere special, Junior, ain't no popular taverns or skating rinks or Lover's Lanes or anything out this way—you've got to want to get here to get here. Junior never answered, and Jill was unnerved when she came upon Pelham standing in the living room addressing a closet door. "Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you!"

"Hon? Hon?"

"I'm after answers, that's what."

In the night, Pelham would rise from bed and patrol the perimeter. He'd sneak through his house in his underwear, carrying an ax handle he'd brought in from the garage. He'd check doors, listen for sounds that might not be benign, creep to a window and peer between the blinds, stand at the empty spot where his father's chair belonged with the ax handle drawn back to swing. He'd repeat his patrol several times in succession before relaxing a bit, and at some point Jill usually joined him in the darkness.

"All clear?"

"Maybe."

On a bright morning outside Kenny's Walleye Restaurant, Pelham finally bumped into Randall Davies Sr. He stood in the parking lot and felt great relief. Randall and his wife stared a moment, then Randall said, "I thought you'd come by before now."

The men started to shake hands, then stalled, averted their glances, let their hands fall to their sides. Mrs. Davies stepped

"I asked him, 'Son, you want to talk about it?' He says, 'Will do, bro.' Here's all your main answers: Yes. I lost count. Like tossin' a bucket of chili into a fan. Pick up all you can, shovel the rest."

soul and quietly say, You might be right, man, come on over. A car drove by a couple of times with young voices screaming something unintelligible but loud and angry. Then a long follow-up article in the town paper made the facts of the case obvious and nobody much blamed Pelham anymore. A day later there was an obituary of Randall Davies Jr., a lifelong member of the Front Street Church of Christ, avid quail hunter, top rebounder on the West Table High basketball team, best buddy to his sisters Chrystal and Joy, a proud member of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq, where he attained the rank of corporal, beloved of many. Jill taped the obit to the refrigerator door so they might slowly come to understand something crucial from regularly looking into the kid's face.

If they snacked at the small kitchen table, the face would be above and between them. It was his boot-camp photograph, wearing dress blues, the white hat and brass insignia, a blank, regimented expression. They'd watch the face as they sliced their food and chewed. Studying that face forced the conversation into certain directions. Pelham might ask yet again, "Why ever'd he leave his weapons outside?"

"And why come in here naked?"

"Why shit on Daddy's chair? Why do that?"

"Contempt, hon. I think that means contempt."

forward then, a tall and very thin woman who'd been several grades behind the men in school, and said, "I know you had the right—but I just can't look at your face. I just can't do it." She walked to Kenny's and went inside, and Randall raised his hand again, and this time they shook. He said, "She can't stand knowin' how wrong things got to be with him. How lost to us."

"I didn't know your son."

"Me, neither, much. I guess that's the awful part that's got so clear now."

"I'm sorry what happened happened."

"You 'n' me need to talk. I'll give you a call."

The summer they'd been buddies fell between grades six and seven. They'd roamed the fields and deep woods, taunted bulls in green pastures, mocked girls on the town square, dawdled in the alleyways where interesting refuse might be found. The Davieses were new arrivals, moved down from Rolla, and Pelham's mother told him to be nice to the freckled boy in thick glasses. Randall was not so hot at sports, but he was willing, and they joined other kids at the park for long, long games of corkball, Indian ball, 500, or, if their numbers swelled, doubleheaders of baseball with complete teams. They swam in Howl Creek, played slapjack on the screened porch when it rained, drank cream soda, and pegged rocks at pigeons in

the empty railroad station. It was their last barefoot summer. Seventh grade brought many complications and new social concerns. Randall was of no help buttering up girls at the drive-in or during a ritual scrap behind the school—more of a burden, really, a chronic liability—and before long, somehow, they didn't hang around together anymore. Nothing angry happened—just a slow dwindling, and soon their friendship had shrunk to a glancing, rote exchange of greetings when passing. How you doin'?

Not bad—you?

Can't kick.

Perfect weather pushed up from Arkansas, and all windows were open to the screens. Jill seemed buoyant and wore only a sheer light-blue nightie. The house breathed that night in the cadence of cicadas, drawing in the smells of honeysuckle and plowed dirt, dogwood and cattle in the distance. Pelham watched the final innings from St. Louis on the bedroom television, a tumbler of bourbon in his hand. Jill lay across the bed, face over the edge, book on the floor, the nightie smoothed to her skin. She snapped the book closed and sat up, "That one's over." The announcer was praising the relief pitching, and Jill went to the bookcase, removed an aged hardback, and started moaning, then snuffing. "What?" he asked, and she pointed at the bookshelf where blood had flown and hidden behind the books, streaking the white paint. "Shit." Pelham fetched a bucket of water and cleaning rags, the stiff brush that worked best, and they cleared the books from the shelf, stacked them on the floor. They scrubbed and scrubbed until the paint flaked and that streaking of blood was gone from sight. Pelham dropped the brush into the bucket and said, "I'll be going to the river with his dad."

They stood on big gray rocks and cast into the current. Shallows began just below the men and the river murmured, passing over the small stones and limestone gravel. Shadows covered the riverbed and halfway up the slope beyond. The current tugged the fishing line like there was a bite and made the rods bend, but the only thing on the line was the river and the bait. Randall spoke with his back to Pelham, "What'd Randy say to you?"

"Not a word. He never spoke."

"How is it you had a knife ready when he showed?"

"He only growled."

"I can't feature that part. I don't get that. I guess I just don't know what kind of shit really goes on over there."

"It's the same shit as always, Randall."

Pelham broke from the stream and stepped to the riverbank. He reached into his knapsack and retrieved a bottle of bourbon, then hopped back onto the gray rocks. He held the bottle toward Randall, then said, "You ever start drinkin' whiskey?"

"Only had to start once."

They sat on the rocks, listening to the river, drinking bourbon from the bottle, letting trout swim past. They sat in silence for ten minutes, twenty, slowly sharing the whiskey. Two kids in yellow kayaks whipped down the channel, racing each other and laughing, easily skirting boulders and skimming the shallows. Their young laughter could yet be heard when they'd floated from sight, far downriver.

"He got different. He was always kind of lonely, you know, not so sure how he stood in the world, always lookin' for somehow to measure himself, prove somethin', figure what size of

man he was. Could be he found out and it broke him."

"Randall, why me?"

"You know, he was plenty spooky sometimes—that stare, the hours 'n' hours when he wouldn't talk. I could see he was hurtin' in some way I never had to know, and he drank vodka in bed of a mornin' with his boots on, and took other stuff, too, right there in the house. So, anyhow, one time I went in there while he stared at the ceiling, with his boots on the sheets, and asked him, 'Son, you want to talk about it?' And he looks at me like he ain't certain sure we've met before, but he says, 'Will do, bro.' Here's all your main answers: Yes. I lost count. Like tossin' a bucket of chili into a fan. Pick up all you can, shovel the rest."

"There it is." That very phrase took Pelham back to a time of rain. He screwed the cap onto the bottle and stood. He stretched his legs and turned upstream. He didn't want to tremble facing Randall. He jumped from the rocks and crouched at the water's edge, dunked his head, and the cold sluiced through him and soaked his neck, drained down his spine. "Whiskey came a little early for me today."

"Me, too."

"Let's go."

THAT NIGHT, PELHAM TAPED his own boot-camp photo onto the refrigerator, side by side with Junior's. Jill looked into the teenaged face of her husband and asked, "Is that even you? You looked like that?"

His head was shaved, skin lightly reddened, hat set too squarely, a slight bruise puffed beneath his left eye, expression flat and unblinking.

"For a while, there, I looked exactly that way."

"Huh. I thought everybody was against Vietnam back then. That's all you ever hear about, anyhow. 'Hell no, we won't go,' that sort of stuff."

"That wasn't our neighborhood."

He studied the two faces and drank a beer, then another. Jill was mostly at the counter, chopping chicken parts to marinate for guests coming by the next night. Citrus and garlic smells were strong. He could see something happening to both faces, that relinquishing of who you'd been replaced by reflexive obedience, a new familiarity with exhaustion. They'd grill dinner and avoid this topic, probably, maybe drink too much just to hear the laughter. He wouldn't want guests to notice the photos, so he pulled them from the refrigerator, careful not to tear the edges, and held both in his hands. He switched the photos from one hand to the other, then back again. Jill became curious and stepped near, smelling of tomorrow, and looked over his shoulder.

"Why did you join again?" she asked, but didn't wait for an answer.

Pelham stepped outside onto the wooden deck. A big moon cut shadows from everything and flung them around. He lay the photos on a lawn chair, then pulled his shirt overhead and dropped it on top of them. Then he slipped from his shoes, dropped his jeans and skivvies, and stood naked near the rail. He leaned on the wood, tried an experimental little growl. The next growl was more sincere, the one after that was louder. Pelham stood upright and breathed deeply, spread his arms wide, growled and growled toward the perimeter, inviting shadows to cross his yard.

"Hon?"

John Yoo

[continued from page 131] Robert H. Coie. "You can't write a memo about it the way you would write about snowmobiling in Yosemite." At the very least, they say, Yoo should have warned of the moral danger the question posed to the essence of America.

Yoo says he shared those concerns. He says he thought he was writing a memo for exceptional cases, for the highly trained specialists of the CIA. "I never thought it would be a good idea for the Army to do it, to put it in the hands of eighteen-year-old kids. But it would be inappropriate if I had that worry and it changed the way I interpreted the law."

So he buckled down to one of the world's most thankless jobs, defining the limits of acceptable pain. He knew it would be easy to draw a vague standard that sounded good and then give the CIA a meaningful wink. But that wouldn't be fair to the officers in the field.

He wanted to draw a clear line.

The problem was, the Justice Department had never prosecuted anyone under the anti-torture statute, so there were no judicial opinions to guide him. Dictionaries defined *severe* as "extreme" and "hard to endure." Yoo studied all the international precedents he could find, including the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in *Ireland v. the United Kingdom*, which found that the use of hoods, continuous loud noise, sleep deprivation, reduced diet, and a stress position called "wall-standing" were all cruel and degrading but not torture.

So where was the line?

He got the crucial phrasing about organ failure and death from a U.S. law concerning health care.

I can't let this pass. "John, you're a very engaging guy. I like you. I can't picture you writing that phrase, 'organ failure or death.'"

"It's the phrase Congress used," he says.

"But health care and interrogation are wildly different subjects."

"That's a fair criticism. But it's still the closest you can get to any definition of that phrase at all."

"But this isn't legal theory anymore. It's going to have a body count."

"It's a difficult issue, I admit. It's the use of violence. It's unpleasant. I don't disagree with that."

"You could have drawn the line in a different place."

"I really tried to distinguish between law and policy," he insists. Despite Yoo's shocking language defining severe pain as "equivalent to" organ failure or death, he points out that the memo clearly defines as torture mock executions, threats of imminent death, and beatings. He also says it's unfair for people to confuse the war crimes of Abu Ghraib with the aggressive interrogations he authorized. His memo also includes a long list of examples of acts that various courts have found to be torture, page after page of severe beatings and electric shocks and even one case where guards shackled a man to a bed, placed a towel over his face, and poured water

down his nose—a nearly exact description of waterboarding, "which people ignore because they focus on that one sentence," Yoo says. "So if you read the whole opinion, I don't think of it as a license to do anything you want to."

It's true, the list is there, the cautionary intent clear. I've never seen it mentioned by any of his critics. But so is Yoo's pet theory about the president's unlimited war powers in an emergency, the passage that would, at least in theory, justify crushing testicles. "Congress may no more regulate the President's ability to detain and interrogate enemy combatants than it may regulate his ability to direct troop movements in the field." This is the section that drives people crazy. When the new head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel officially withdrew the memo, he singled it out for its "unusual lack of care and sobriety," its "cursor and one-sided legal arguments." No matter what Lincoln or Truman did, they say, Yoo never should have tried to make presidential lawbreaking legal. But Yoo insists that suicide terrorism in the age of nuclear weapons is precisely the kind of situation he anticipated in his law-school theory, the reason the founders left the president's war powers vague.

"But at the same time," I say, "you know that by writing that opinion, by using those words, you're opening the gates."

"I agree," he answers. "The language is not pleasing, it's not politically savvy—I didn't see that as my job."

"And you didn't have any moral qualms?"

He looks me right in the eye. "I think there are some moral questions. But the other side of the moral question is the lives you might save. I have a hard time believing any responsible American president would have said, 'No, absolutely not, do not ask him any more questions, give him a lawyer.' I don't think Al Gore would have said that."

But those harsh interrogation techniques migrated straight to Iraq. What about that?

"That was definitely not permitted under the decision-making level I was at," Yoo says. "It was clearly not. The Geneva Conventions fully applied in Iraq."

And the memo he wrote that was made public this spring, which justified harsh interrogation techniques for military interrogators?

That worried him, he says. But it only applied to interrogators of Al Qaeda prisoners in Guantánamo, and Yoo says that he expressed his concerns to officials "at high levels of the Department of Justice, the White House, and the Department of Defense."

Is it possible that partisan loyalty blinded him to the dangers of putting all that power into the hands of a president so reckless and extreme, the worst combination of cowboy machismo with this radical theory of executive power?

"I can see why people have that view, but I just don't think this is the product of people who have this radical worldview."

"But Cheney was primed. He said we would have to go to the dark side."

Yoo doesn't say anything for a moment, then answers in his usual measured tone. "In World

War II, we interned people, tens of thousands of citizens. We tried citizens who were enemy spies under military commissions which had no procedures at all. We let the Air Force kill hundreds of thousands of civilians in fire-bombing runs in Europe. We dropped a nuclear weapon on Japan. Waterboarding we think is torture, but it happened to three people. The scale of magnitude is different."

"But if the war goes on forever, we've created a torture state."

"We've done it three times," he repeats.

"The White House launched an elective war against a country based on false premises."

"They made a mistake."

"But your theory puts the power in the hands of a person who then can invade the wrong country."

"Who can make a mistake. The Constitution can't protect against bad decisions," he insists. "What the framers were really worried about was not that the president would make a mistake, but that the president would become a dictator, and I really don't think Bush has become that."

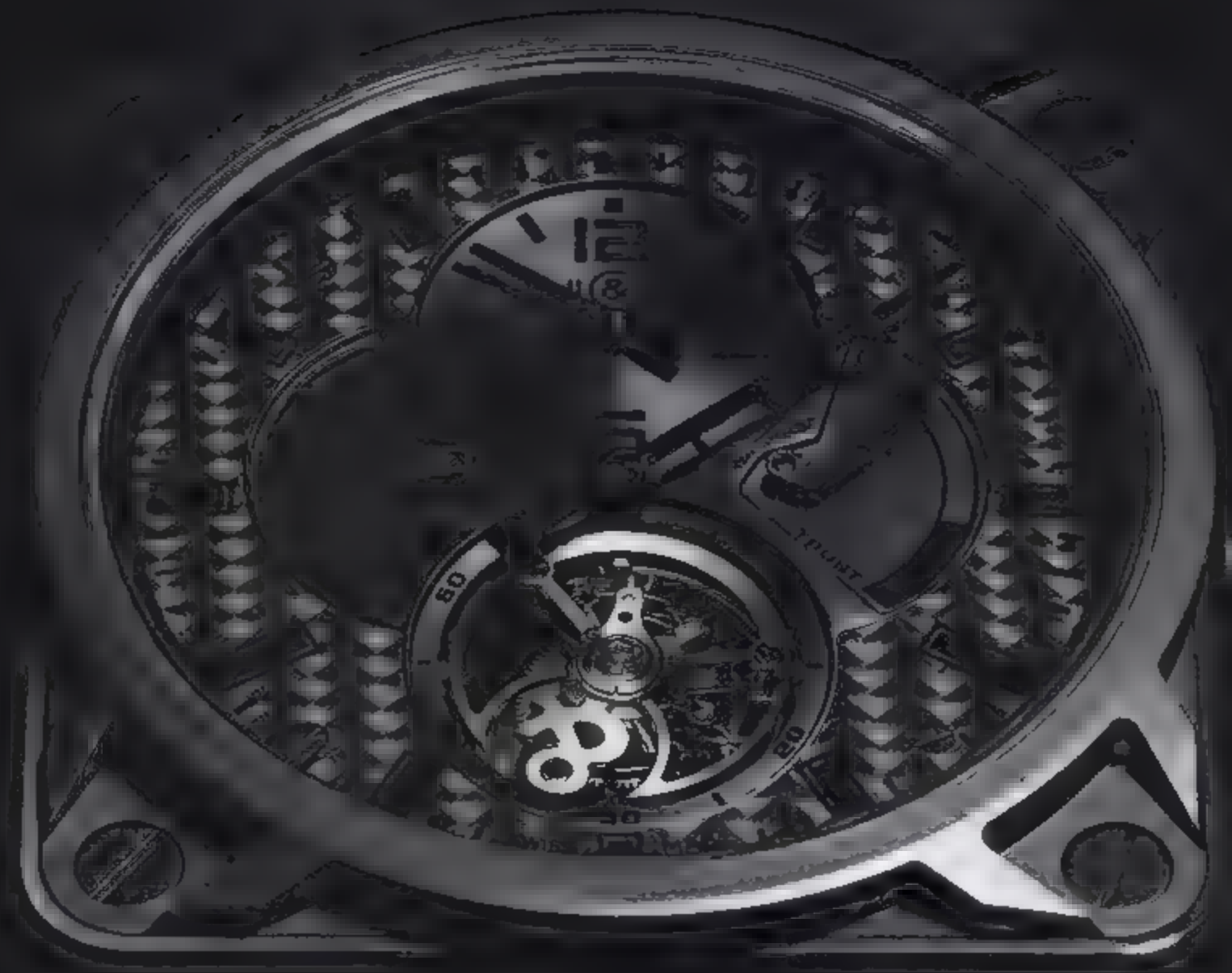
And looking back? Does he still think it was the right decision?

"I still think I would have done the same—with Abu Zubaydah. But I didn't want the military to use these methods. My advice was not taken on that."

Yoo left the Justice Department in May of 2003, just after Mission Accomplished, three months before Major General Geoffrey Miller was sent to Iraq to "Gitmoize" Abu Ghraib.

So what is severe pain? We asked John Yoo, and he drew the line for us, and now he is tainted in our eyes, rendered unclean by his contact with the unspeakable. The broken figure of Jose Padilla and the horrors of Abu Ghraib will loom behind him forever. "I got a call from the *L.A. Times* asking me if he was a war criminal," says his old Harvard professor sadly. "All my friends see him in that light." But if you read the thousands of essays and books and blogs that rage against him, you will find very few that give a satisfactory answer to the question Yoo was asked. How would you define severe pain? If thousands of lives are at stake and time is of the essence? Would you allow sleep manipulation? Heat and cold? Isolation? Hunger? I asked Jose Padilla's lawyer three times. Where would you draw the line, Mr. Freeman? He dodged it twice. The third time he said outright, "I'm not going to draw that line for you. But I'll tell you where I would have looked—I would have first looked at the Constitution to see what was permissible, then I would have looked at the Geneva Conventions..."


So we still don't have an answer to the question. Some people take comfort in the argument that torture never works. Others say that only an imminent threat to the existence of the nation would justify it. Some say that torture should always be against the law as long as we remember that some laws are meant to be broken, a camp that includes John McCain and



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John Yoo

Judge Richard Posner in his recent book, *Not a Suicide Pact: The Constitution in a Time of National Emergency*: "In national emergencies most soldiers and other security personnel are willing to do what the situation demands and leave their legal liabilities to be sorted out later. They live for such emergencies, and are selected for courage."

Was that Yoo's real mistake? Saying it out loud?

I ask him the question nobody in the Bush administration wants to answer: "Is waterboarding torture?"

He doesn't hesitate. "It's on the line. It doesn't cause long-term or permanent pain, but it does cause intense pain. It seems to meet the requirements of the statute in some ways—but not all. So it seems to me that in very limited circumstances, you can use it."

Is what was done to Jose Padilla morally wrong?

"I really cannot talk about that, however much I would like to, because of the litigation brought by Padilla against me," Yoo says. "But perhaps I can say that the memos only applied to captured Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders held outside the United States. They would not apply to an American citizen or permanent resident alien held anywhere in the world, or to anyone held within the United States."

He has other regrets. "I could have tried to press harder on what the Army should have

done," he says. But he won't back down on the rest. He'd write the torture memos the same today, he told me. Alone among Bush administration officials, he does not run from what he has done. He writes editorials and participates in as many as forty public forums a year. In Los Angeles, I even saw him debate a professor of queer theory, an absurd spectacle. "No man is above the law," she said, wanting it to be simple. "This is a question of tragic choices," he answered, insisting it is not.

Not that anyone is listening. Yoo has become the focus of national anger about every excess in the war on terrorism, and minds are made up. But dismissing him as a monster just means that we don't have to think about why he did what he did. Grant him his good intentions, entertain the possibility that he did it to save lives, recognize the honor in his refusal to hide, and his story becomes a cautionary tale about the incremental steps that can lead a nation to disaster.

Back in his class, the ghosts return. "Let's turn to Hamdi v. Rumsfeld on page 172," he says.

The students open their books.

"Did you all do Mathews in civil procedure? Remember, it was a case about terminating welfare benefits, and it was all a question of balancing different interests. So what is Hamdi's interest?"

"To not be detained—liberty."

"And what is government's interest?"

"To wage war."

Pages rustle, the sound of leaves blowing across graves. ■

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The Obscure Sportsman's Guide to Wearing White, p. 134: Polo by Ralph Lauren cricket vest and shirt, ralph-lauren.com. Canali trousers, canali.it. P. 135: Burberry London shirt and trousers, burberry.com. Pp. 136-137: Pure DKNY shirt and DKNY shirt, dkny.com. Diesel jeans, diesel.com. Panerai watch, panerai.com. Zegna Sport sweater and Zegna henley, zegna.com. Prada trousers, 888-977-1900. Polo by Ralph Lauren vest and shirt, ralph-lauren.com. Canali trousers, canali.it. Brooks Brothers Country Club trousers, brooksbrothers.com. Salvatore Ferragamo sweater, 800-628-8916. P. 138: Calvin Klein Collection jacket, 877-256-7373. Calvin Klein shirt, 800-289-6229. P. 139: Dolce & Gabbana suit and shirt, dolcegabbana.it. P. 140: Prada jacket, 888-977-1900, and T-shirt, 877-551-7257. Adidas Originals sneakers, 212-826-8900. P. 141: Paul Smith jacket, 212-753-7300. John Varvatos henley, johnvarvatos.com. P. 142: Emporio Armani jacket, emporioarmani.com. Boss Black T-shirt, 800-484-6267.



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